The Sheikhs of Oman: A Study on the Correlation Between Tribal Hierarchy and Residences

Demah Taif Alsafy

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Approval of the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research

Prof. Dr. Ali Hakan Ulusoy
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Architecture.

Prof. Dr. Resmiye Alpar Atun
Chair, Department of Architecture

We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Architecture.

Prof. Dr. Özgür Dinçyürek
Supervisor

Examining Committee

1. Prof. Dr. Özgür Dinçyürek

2. Asst. Prof. Dr. Nilay Bilsel

3. Asst. Prof. Dr. Nazife Özay

ABSTRACT

The available literature on the traditional housing patterns in the Sultanate of Oman is limited. Research that specifically associates the social aspect of Arab tribes with architecture has not been carried out, either. Oman's prolonged isolation from the rest of the world until recently has ensured that its tribal systems have been preserved in their natural state, allowing for an overall better quality of gathered data. This thesis aims to identify the main architectural elements of a Sheikh's house and determine whether tribal hierarchy plays a role in the design of a tribal member's accommodation. Working from there, it seeks to answer two questions: Is the Sheikh's house different from the rest of the tribe? And are the differences or similarities consistent throughout the country? In this context, a Sheikh is the leader of a tribe and the house occupied by a Sheikh and his family is termed a 'Sheikhly House'.

To obtain comprehensive results, eighteen houses across the five most-populated regions in the country were picked at random and visited. These were (in descending order of population) Muscat, Al Batinah North, Ad Dakhiliyah, Dhofar and Ash Sharqiyah South. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the owners, and architectural studies of the houses were carried out. The architectural studies included the building area, plan, section and elevation sketches, a sketch of the site plan, and the degree of ornamentation/façade treatment. The analysis demonstrated some similarities and differences between the sheikhly and non-sheikhly houses in every region, as well as similarities between the sheikhly houses across the different regions of the country. Results indicate that characteristics unique to sheikhly houses do exist, and they could potentially be used to identify if a certain house belongs to a Sheikh,

despite rare exceptions. These exceptions indicate that tribal hierarchy, despite thought of as being important in the past, generally holds diminutive value in factoring how an individual now chooses to build their residence. As the Sultanate continues to grow and move towards a more contemporary society, the distinction between sheikhs and non-sheikhs as well as its reflection on their houses will cease to exist altogether.

Keywords: Oman, Tribes, Sheikhs, Traditional Houses, Contemporary Houses

ÖZ

Umman Sultanlığı'ndaki geleneksel konut modellerine ilişkin mevcut literatür sınırlıdır. Özellikle arap kabilelerinin yönünün mimariyle ilişkisine dair araştırma yapılmamıştır. Umman'ın yakın zamana kadar süregelen izolasyonu, kabilelerin doğal hallerini korumasını ve bu konuda daha doğru veriler elde edilmesini sağlamıştır. Bu tez, bir Şeyh'in evinin ana mimari unsurlarını belirlemeyi ve kabile hiyerarşisinin bir kabile üyesinin konaklama tasarımında bir rol oynayıp oynamadığını belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Buradan hareketle iki soruyu yanıtlamaya çalışır: Şeyh'in evi kabilenin geri kalanından farklı mı? Ve ülke genelinde farklılıklar veya benzerlikler tutarlı mı? Bu bağlamda, Şeyh bir kabilenin lideridir ve bir Şeyh ve ailesinin yaşadığı eve 'Şeyh Evi' denir.

Kapsamlı sonuçlar elde etmek için, ülkenin en kalabalık beş bölgesinden on sekiz ev rastgele seçildi ve ziyaret edildi. Bunlar (nüfus sırasına göre) Muscat, Al Batinah North, Ad Dakhiliyah, Dhofar ve Ash Sharqiyah South idi. Sahipleri ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmış ve evlerin mimari çalışmaları yapılmıştır. Analiz, her bölgedeki şeyhlik ve şeyhlik dışı evler arasında bazı benzerlikler ve farklılıklar ile ülkenin farklı bölgelerindeki şeyh evleri arasındaki benzerlikleri gösterdi. Sonuçlar, şeyh evlerine özgü özelliklerin var olduğunu ve nadir istisnalara rağmen, belirli bir evin Şeyh'e ait olup olmadığını belirlemek için potansiyel olarak kullanılabileceğini gösteriyor. Bu istisnalar, aşiret hiyerarşisinin, geçmişte önemli olduğu düşünülmesine rağmen, genellikle bir bireyin ikametgâhını nasıl inşa etmeyi seçtiğini faktörlemede küçük bir değere sahip olduğunu göstermektedir.

Saltanat büyümeye ve daha çağdaş bir topluma doğru ilerlemeye devam ettikçe, şeyhler ve şeyh olmayanlar arasındaki ayrım ve onun evleri üzerindeki yansıması tamamen ortadan kalkacak.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Umman, Kabileler, Şeyhler, Geleneksel Evler, Çağdaş Evler

To my parents,

To Oman,

and its people.

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I would like to express my gratitude to the participants in the study who accepted me into their homes and were extremely cooperative in all aspects of the research phase.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Life in the Sultanate of Oman is heavily governed by tradition and culture, with individuals strongly tied to their families and tribes. The tribal system has been the driving factor of identity for centuries in the country, only recently having taken a backseat after the shift of power from tribal leaders to the government. The roots of this society extend to multiple aspects of Omani life, including their architecture. Since there is a hierarchy in the tribal system, it would make sense that this hierarchy is projected onto physical or visible elements, like their houses. The tribe leader or 'Sheikh' holds the highest position in the tribe, and his obligations bring with them certain requirements that would not exist for the rest of the tribe. The demographic and lifestyle of people in the northern region of the country differ from those in the southern region, but there are still general cultural similarities. All of the above factors suggest there might be interesting differences between the residences of Sheikhs and the rest of their tribe, as well as possible regional variations.

1.2 Research Problem

Existing literature on Omani architecture is lacking, both in amount and diversity. The only comprehensive studies done are over twenty years old, and this leaves a large gap in the available information. Additionally, the approach taken in this thesis, particularly combining tribal culture with domestic architecture, has not been considered before.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

This research aims to identify the main architectural elements of a Sheikh's house and compare them with the houses of other families in the tribe. The comparison will also extend to the regional level where the differences or similarities between the studied regions will be explored. The main question this study seeks to answer is: At the tribal level, does the Sheikh's residence differ from the rest of the tribe's houses? Beyond that question, it also seeks to recognize the differences at the regional level, whether they carry on to all the other regions, and what the differences/similarities are in that case.

1.4 Limitations

The research is geographically limited to just the Sultanate of Oman. This is because Oman has been isolated from the rest of the world until very recently, which has preserved the tribal system and its core values against modernization. There are over 200 distinct tribes in the 11 governorates of Oman, which makes it an extremely demanding task to document and analyze a large number of tribes in all the governorates. Therefore, emphasis was placed on the five largest regions by population based on information obtained from a report published by the National Centre for Statistics and Information in Oman (NCSI) (2019). In descending order of population, these regions were Muscat, Al Batinah North, Ad Dakhiliyah, Al Batinah South, Dhofar, and Ash Sharqiyah South. As both Al Batinah governorates were located next to each other and experienced similar physical and socio-economic conditions, only Al Batinah North had been studied. These five regions covered all the main geographical and topographical classifications in the country, which in turn influence the social and economic aspects as well, thereby ensuring that all possible factors had been accounted for. Omani architecture includes forts, castles and mosques; however,

they are not within the scope of this thesis. Since the research is focused on the relation between tribal hierarchy and residences, the houses of the sheikhs as well as common individuals of the tribe should be studied together.

Just as the sheikh represents his tribe politically and culturally, the sheikh's house is supposed to reflect the tribe and region's architectural preferences. However, the number of houses visited in each governorate varied slightly. As this study dealt with people's houses and their privacy, it is understandable that not many people were willing to participate. Out of those that participated, many of them were only comfortable showing the ground floor of the house, as the remaining floors (if any) housed the private sleeping quarters of the family. To the best of the author's abilities, a fair representation was put forward for each governorate that was visited. The research did not include any archival studies of the houses, as these provided no significant information to aid the principal analysis. Structural analysis was not considered, since almost all houses were built using the same materials and in the same structural pattern. Approximate, to-scale drawings and sketches using CAD software were used to sufficiently convey the observed architectural data.

1.5 Methodology

The subject that was addressed concerned the social patterns of a community and their relationship with architecture - elements that cannot be quantified. Thus, the research was mainly qualitative (partly ethnographic) in nature, utilizing qualitative data collection techniques and interpretation to arrive at a result. These included a literature review, interviews, site visits and personal observation. Once all the raw data was collected from the studied cases, it was categorized and simplified into tables and inventories before being interpreted in the results and conclusion chapters.

1.5.1 Literature Review

This consisted of an overview of the existing literature related to the subject, with the focus of each being highlighted. Several chapters providing background information regarding the main topics of the thesis, such as information regarding the Sultanate of Oman, its tribal system, vernacular architecture and contemporary architecture were also included. Sources comprised of journal articles, books, dissertations and periodicals, some of which were locally published in Arabic. Many of the sources were accessible online, while others were only found in select libraries within Oman.

1.5.2 Site Visits and Personal Observation

The selection of participants and consequent personal visits to their residence were the most important aspects of the study. The target group consisted of Omani adults over the age of 18 that primarily resided in the country. Keeping in mind the generally conservative nature of Arab and Islamic societies, a public call for participation in what the study entailed would have been inappropriate and ineffective. Thus, social connections played a crucial role in acquiring willing volunteers, because the delicacy of the situation did not allow for other means of requesting participation. Through the author's relatives and acquaintances, multiple eligible individuals were contacted and briefed regarding the study. If any of them were prepared to participate, they were requested to seek out their own relations within the tribe so as to form a group of participants that belonged to the same tribe and resided in the same governorate. The sheikhs of the respective tribes were also contacted, with the aim to acquire three or four non-sheikhly participants for every sheikh. Having multiple non-sheikhly houses to compare against the sheikh's house would allow for fairer and more consistent data representation. Since this method was applied to select participants, there were no parameters involved in the selection of house areas. The random approach implied

that the focus was on the participants and that they influenced the direction the study went in.Once enough participants for the study were found (eighteen), they were all personally visited over the span of a month for site analysis, observation and interviews. The visits lasted about two hours each on average, rarely exceeding three hours.

Prior to conducting any form of data collection, participants were handed a consent form that they were asked to read and sign. The forms guaranteed the privacy of the participants and stated what each of them would be agreeing to provide in relation to the study. For ease of explanation and efficiency, two versions of the consent form were handed out to them; one in English and the other in Arabic. Participants were asked to retain the signed Arabic copy, should they wish to contact the author in the future regarding the research. Both versions of the consent form as well as copies signed by the participants can be viewed in Appendix A.

For each volunteer's house that was visited, an architectural evaluation was conducted based on personal observation and data obtained from the participant. Visits were conducted during the day while there was sufficient natural light, which was intended for accurate viewing of the exterior elements and better photograph quality. The evaluation included plan, section and elevation sketches, photographs, building materials used, size of plot and built area, ornamentation, significant/unique features, and surrounding environment/neighborhood. All collected data was recorded as written notes and photographs were taken using the camera on the author's mobile phone. The inventory for each house can be found in the Appendices section.

1.5.3 Interviews

To gain a deeper understanding of the decision-making process behind the design of their houses, simple interviews were conducted with the participants of the study. In total, nineteen interviews were conducted, each during the site visit of the respective accommodation. The interviews were semi-structured and started with pre-arranged questions regarding basic facts of the house. Conversation generally extended beyond them, allowing the participants to share their thoughts and experiences on the subject being explored. This provided greater insight into the lives of the people and how they interacted with their residence, information that could have not been obtained in any other way. None of the interviews were recorded, but the participants' answers to the questions were written down along with other important pieces of information that they shared. A copy of the prepared questions for the interview can be found in Appendix B.

Chapter 2

OVERVIEW ON THE SULTANATE, ITS TRIBES AND ARCHITECTURE

2.1 An Overview of the Sultanate

2.1.1 Location

The Sultanate of Oman is a country in the Arabian Peninsula with a strategically significant position at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. It is bordered by the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. It also shares maritime borders with both Pakistan and Iran. Oman has a long coastline formed along the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman.

Figure 1: Location of Oman on the World Map (own work)

2.1.2 Geography

At about 310,000 km^2 in size, Oman is the third largest country in the Arabian Peninsula. It is divided into 11 governorates, namely Ad Dakhiliyah, Ad Dhahirah, Al Batinah North, Al Batinah South, Al Buraymi, Al Wusta, Ash Sharqiyah North, Ash Sharqiyah South, Dhofar, Musandam and Muscat. These can be seen in Fig. 2 below. The governorates in turn are divided into provinces called *Wilayat*, and there are 61 provinces in total. The country's offshore territories include Al-Dimaniyat Islands to the north, Maṣirah Island to the east and Al-Ḥallaniyyat Islands off the south coast.

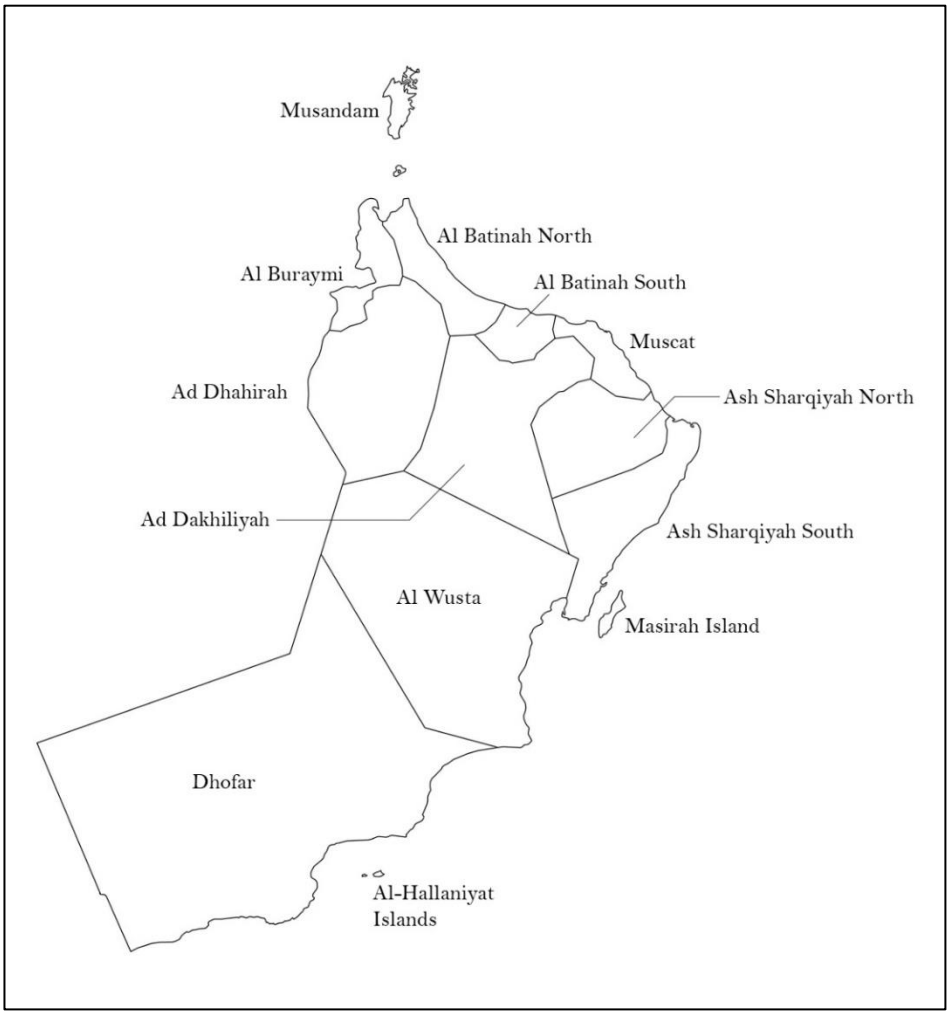

Figure 2: Map showing the Governorates of Oman (own work)

2.1.3 Climate

Oman lies to the north and south of the Tropic of Cancer, thereby belonging to the hot and dry regions of the globe. The climate in most of the country is generally hot, with summer temperatures sometimes reaching 50°C. The coastal plains are humid while the interior regions are dry. Dhofar in the south is an exception, since it is the only region that receives annual monsoon showers (*Khareef*) in the summer and temperatures rarely exceed 35°C all year round.

2.1.4 Topography and Economy

Oman's natural features can be categorized into four distinct zones – Coastal plains, Mountains, Deserts and Rocky plains. The deserts and rocky plains make up about 80% of the country's topography. In the north, the narrow and fertile Batinah plain overlooks the Gulf of Oman, stretching for 270 kilometers along the coast (Arabia Felix, 2018). The Hajar Mountains chain runs parallel to the coast and separates the interior from the coast. It extends from the northernmost Ras Al-Jabal region in Musandam to Ras Al Hadd, the eastern tip of Oman. The area surrounding the Hajar mountains and the Batinah plain holds the majority of the country's population (National Centre for Statistics and Information, 2019). To the south of the Hajar mountains lies the barren, rocky plateau of Jiddat al Harasis. It separates the north of Oman from the south and is the largest strewn field of meteorites in the country (Gnos et al, 2009). To the west of this plateau lies the Rub Al Khali desert and to the east lie the Wahiba Sands, south of the Sharqiyyah region. The combination of rocky plateau and deserts make this part of the country *terra nullius*, although some tribes have persevered. Dhofar is the southernmost region of Oman, situated close to the Yemeni border. Here, the mountain range is dotted with frankincense trees that Oman is famous

for, and the Salalah coastal plain is another fertile part of the Sultanate. All the regions discussed above can be viewed in Figure 3.

Oman's economy is diversified but still largely dependent on oil and gas exports, which make up 74% of the country's gross domestic product (KPMG, 2019). Other sectors that contribute to the GDP are tourism, infrastructure, agriculture and fishing (Coleman, 2019). Agriculture is mainly practiced in the coastal plains and parts of the rocky plateau around the Hajar mountains. With regards to tourism, many local spots around the country have touristic potential but the areas that receive the most visitors are the cities of Muscat and Salalah, mainly during their respective Tourism Festivals.

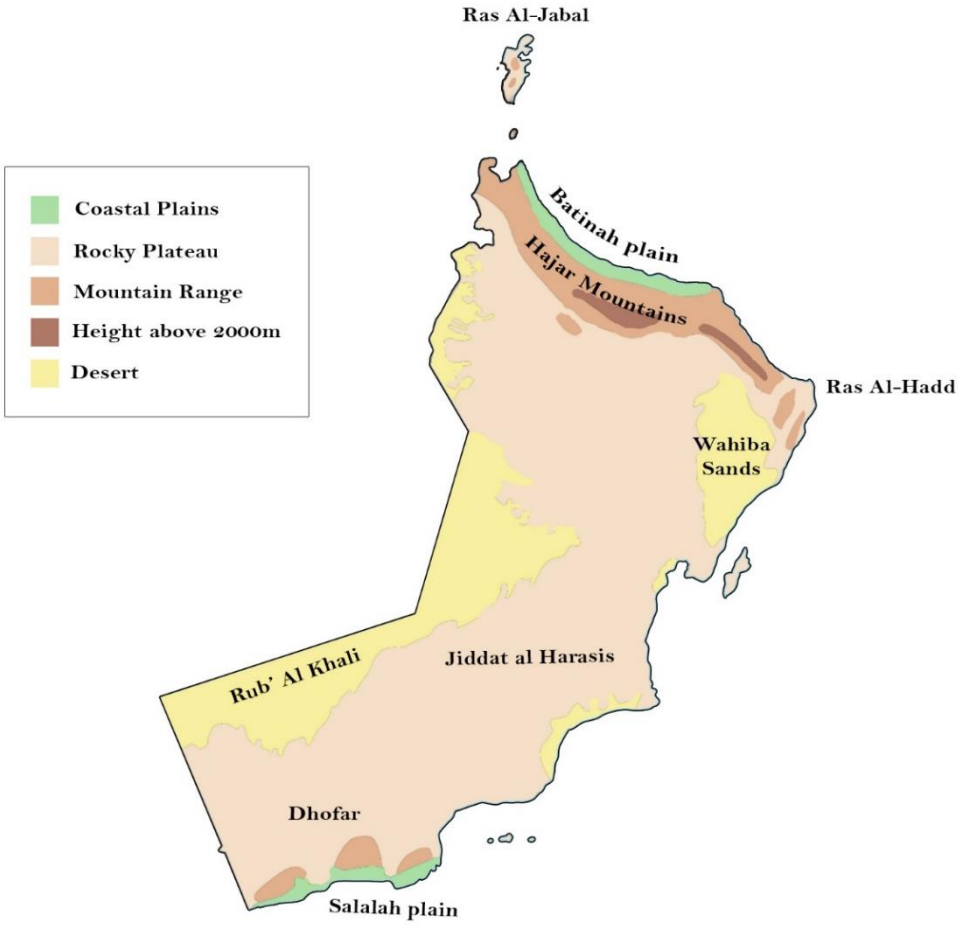

Figure 3: Topographical Map of Oman (own work)

2.1.5 History

The earliest known records of Oman's history provide a vague description of the area's origins, but general consensus is that the earliest inhabitants were Sassanid Persians, followed by South Arabians who moved to Oman in the 2nd century A.D (Risso, 2016). After the initial Islamic conquests began in the 7th century, the Persian settlement was expelled, and the rule was placed in the hands of the Arabs and Muslim Caliphs (Risso, 2016). In the second half of the 8th century, Ibadism (a Kharijite sect of Islam) was adopted in Central Oman and it became an Imamate after the election of the first *Imam*, Julanda bin Masud (Badger, 1871). Oman continued to be ruled by Imams till their power was shadowed by the arrival of the Portuguese. The Portuguese conquered several Omani ports at the turn of the 16th century then proceeded to build forts and establish trade from their principal port of Muscat (Peterson, 2007). During this time, the Ottomans made several successful attempts at plundering Omani ports, but did not assert power over the people (Risso, 2016). In 1624, the election of Nasir bin Murshid of the Ya'ariba clan as Imam brought about the reunification of Omanis and the expulsion of the Portuguese (Lorimer, 1915). Imams regained their political power and the Ya'ariba dynasty ruled Oman prosperously and peacefully, extending their empire to the coast of East Africa and commanding great maritime authority (Bhacker, 1992). The Ya'aribas fell in 1744 due to civil war and Ahmad bin Said was elected Imam, concurrently establishing the Al Bu Said dynasty (Lorimer, 1915). At the end of the 18th century, Oman was once again split by Hamad bin Said, Ahmad's grandson, who chose to form an independent state in Muscat focused on coastal trade (Bhacker, 1992). The Sultans of the Al Bu Said dynasty, as they came to be known, extended their power to the coasts of Makran (present day Pakistan) and Persia (present day Iran), and made Oman the most powerful state in the region (Coleman, 2019).

The interior of Oman saw a revival of the Imamate, and the country was officially split into the Imamate (the interior) and Sultanate (the coast) by the 1920 Treaty of Sib (Wilkinson, 1971). In 1959 and with the help of the British, Sultan Said bin Taymur terminated the treaty and brought an end to the Imamate, thereby regaining control of the entire regions of Oman (Peterson, 1977). His son, Qaboos bin Said, initiated a bloodless coup against him and overtook the throne in 1970, and has been the Sultan of Oman ever since (Peterson, 1971).

2.1.6 Demographics

As of 2018, the population of Oman is nearly 4.6 million, with around 45% of them expatriates from other countries (National Centre for Statistics and Information, 2019). As mentioned earlier, the bulk of the population lies in the northern part of Oman, with Muscat being the most densely populated city in the country.

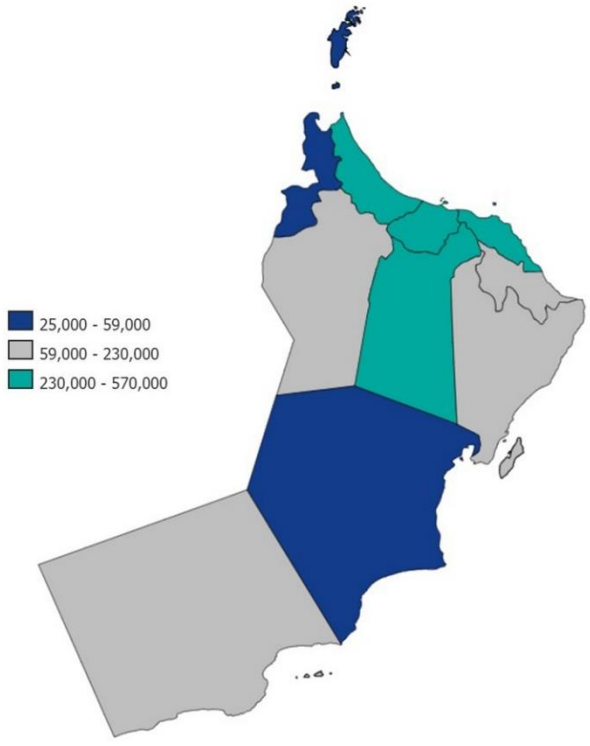

Figure 4: Population map of the governorates of Oman. (NCSI, 2019)

Expatriates are mainly from the Indian subcontinent (nearly 87% of the expatriate population), Philippines, Egypt, and Jordan (Bel-Air, 2015). Oman's social fabric is very diverse and embraces the country's history of overseas acquisitions. The ethnic communities separate themselves from each other by language and/or religious sect but are united under the umbrella of the Omani identity. Most Omanis are Muslim, but interestingly enough, the people in the north follow the Ibadi and Shi'a schools of Islam, whereas the people in the south follow the Sunni school.

In the northern part of Oman, there is a larger variety of groups that were not of Arab origin but rather emigrated and settled there, forming their own tribes and having their distinct territories. Years of inter-tribal marriages have blurred the hard boundaries between the Arab and non-Arab tribes. There are the *Baluch*, who came from the mainly Pakistani region of Baluchistan and speak Baluchi. They constitute the biggest non-Arab community in Oman and are clustered along the Batinah coast and in Muscat (Peterson, 2004). The *Zadjalis* are another such group, with origins tied to Pakistan as well, but are different from the Baluch. There are many smaller groups that originate from India, Zanzibar and Persia, owing to Oman's colonial history. As a result, the following languages can be heard spoken by indigenous Omanis – Arabic, Baluchi, Lawati, Zadjali, Gujarati and Swahili. In the southern part of Oman (Dhofar region), the situation is different. The people there are predominantly of Arab origin and distinguish themselves based primarily on spoken language, which include *Jabbali, Mahri, Habyoti, Bathari, Hikmani*, and *Harsusi* (Peterson, 2004). They are all dialects of South Arabic, which is very different from the Arabic spoken by the rest of the Arabian Peninsula. Over the years, Arabic became more popular and is now widely spoken by all these communities, but this shift has endangered those languages to the point where they could be lost soon.

2.1.7 Politics

Oman is an absolute monarchy, headed by Sultan Haitham bin Tariq who came to power in January 2020. He is also the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Minister of Defense, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Central Bank (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018). The Council of Ministers, which is directly appointed by the sultan, functions as his cabinet. In 1996, Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the previous sultan, promulgated the basic law of the state, called the 'white book' (*Al Kitab Al Abyad*), which served as a form of constitution. The legislative body, called Council of Oman (*Majlis Oman*), has two chambers – *Majlis Ash-Shura* and *Majlis Ad-Dawla*.

The Majlis Ash-Shura is the consultative council, consisting of 86 members who represent each wilaya, elected for four-year terms by the people (Delury & Schlager, 2006). Wilayas that have a population over 30,000 are represented by two members. The council, as its name suggests, serves a consultative purpose to the legislation and law-passing process. However, its principal role is to communicate the concerns of the people all over Oman to the central government and similarly to inform their citizens of the government's proposals (Rabi, 2002).

Majlis Ad-Dawla is the State Council, the upper chamber of the legislative body of Oman. Its members are appointed by the Sultan and are usually former ministers, ambassadors, senior judges, senior retired officers or anyone the Sultan deems appropriate for the position (Rabi, 2002). They serve for four-year terms parallel to the consultative council. Majlis Ad-Dawla basically reviews all recommendations that emerge from Majlis Ash-Shura and is meant to form a balance between the people's desires and the country's benefits.

"Neither council has legislative power, but they can initiate proposals, review draft laws, and conduct studies to help implement development plans" (Al-Farsi, 2010, pp. 89). Oman's legal system is based on English common law and the *Shari'a* (Islamic law). The judiciary is independent but responsibility for the entire court system falls on the Ministry of Justice. There are four levels of courts in Oman that hear civil and commercial matters: The Supreme Court, the Appellate Courts, the Preliminary Courts, and the Courts of Summary Jurisdiction (Trowers & Hamlins, 2000). The Shari'a Court which deals with personal matters also exists, albeit having its importance greatly diminished (Siegfried, 2000). There is also an Administrative Court and Public Prosecution Authority that answers directly to the Sultan (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018).

2.2 Tribes and the Socio-Administrative System of Oman

Tribal systems form the very essence of Arab culture and have existed in the Arab world long before Islam was introduced to it. Scholars seem unable to agree on a particular definition of what the tribal system constitutes, but they all have a common agreed-upon basis. In the words of Matthew Bank (2008), "Tribalism can best be understood as a constructed reality that deals with the social and political relationships between people who accept the tribal identity" (p. 7). This also implies that the tribal structure will cease to exist if its members stop using the identity. Generally, the tribe is regarded as a cultural, linguistic and political entity that dictates most aspects of its members' lives (Marx, 1977). The structure of an Arab tribe may vary from one country to another, but the general division is explained below in Figure 5.

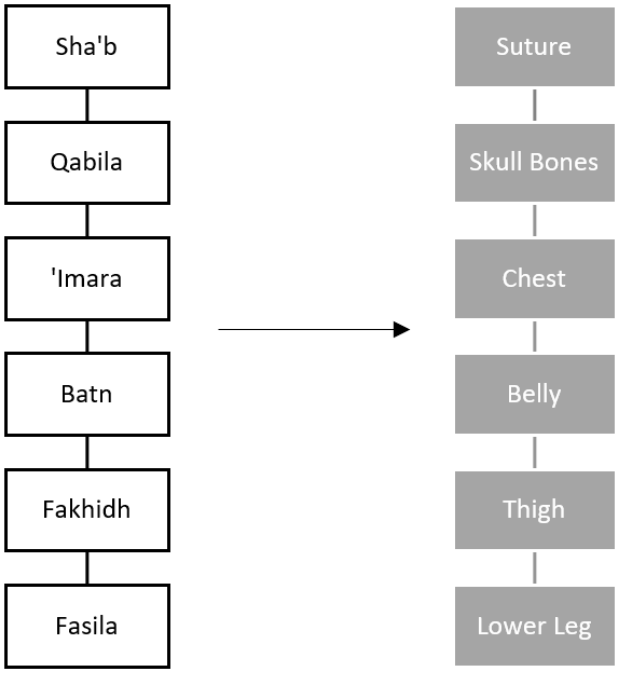

Figure 5: Division of Tribal Branches and their corresponding body part analogies

Each term on the left in the above figure corresponds to the body part on the right. The terms focused on metaphors of body parts which was customary for many tribal societies at the time, starting with the top of the head for the largest grouping and ending at the lower leg for the smallest unit. *Fasila* or *Bait* is the extended family and the smallest unit in the tribal structure, but by modern standards technically consists of smaller nuclear families each called *Usra*. The Bait consists of a man, his wife, unmarried children, married sons and their wives and children. As per tradition, a woman joins her husband's family when she gets married. The resulting household can have up to four generations living under one roof where the father is the main provider and, as such, considered to be the most powerful figure in the family. The *Fakhidh* consists of a number of families, the *Batn* is a group of Fakhidhs and so on, ascending to the largest unit called the *Sha'b*. For the purpose of clarification and in the context of this thesis, *Qabila* is what is usually referred to as the Tribe. The Sha'b is a massive unit comprising of many tribes, which can be loosely translated to mean

a Country or ‘people of a place’. This detailed division is not commonly used in current times and neither is any individual asked to list his/her entire lineage. Instead, just a few segments continue to be important and include the Qabila, Fakhidh and Bait. The main element of the Arab tribal system is that it is strictly patrilinear and all members of a tribe believe they are descendants of one common ancestor. A well-established tribe will have a significant number of generations dating back hundreds of years.

Just as the father is the head of the family, the *Sheikh* is the head of the tribe. Sheikh literally translates to ‘old man’ or an elder and plays a crucial role in managing the affairs of the tribe. Generally, the sheikh’s position is hereditary but could also be bestowed upon him or he could be elected by the members of the tribe. Sheikhs bring people together and help to resolve their disagreements. They also have a responsibility to represent their tribes at inter-tribal gatherings or when there are disputes between other tribes (Bank, 2008). As a leader, the sheikh’s most important skill is his ability to convince people (Caton, 1987). People are more likely to hold the sheikh in high regard if he is able to successfully persuade them to take a certain action and help to solve their issues. If a tribe is exceptionally large, there may be many sheikhs managing different sections of the tribe. In this case, a *Tamimah*, or supreme sheikh, exerts political strength over all sections of such a tribe (Al-Farsi, 2010). The tribal Council, consisting of scholars, elders and wise men that represent a traditional repository of knowledge, also assist the sheikh in decisive matters concerning the welfare of the tribe.

Family and Honor are two fundamental concepts in the lives of Arabs with a tribal identity. Different tribes have different ways that its members must acquire and preserve their honor, but the notion that individuals have honor and their honor affects

that of the rest of their kin is observed in most Arab tribes. One tradition that shows the significance of family is the practice of calling fathers by a name that connects them with their eldest son. For example, if a man's oldest son is named Mazen, he will usually be addressed as 'Abu Mazen', literally meaning the father of Mazen. The same goes for the mother, in which case she would be called 'Um Mazen' (mother of Mazen). Another naming tradition is using family lineages in a person's name. The first name is followed by the father's name, then the grandfather's, then the great grandfather's, and so on, as far back as the lineage is known. Consequently, Arabs tend to have very long names, unlike the rest of the world.

The Omani Interior's seclusion away from the center of modern world affairs has allowed a tribal system to exist until quite recently in what can be perceived as a natural state (Carter, 1977). To understand the special circumstances of this country's tribes, we must look at its history. Omanis were deeply invested in the early growth of *Ibadism*, a school of Islam. The first lbadi state was created in Oman in the eighth century A.D under the guidance of an Imam. As a result, the Omani heartland gained a distinct communal and religious recognition and was also presented with a tradition of a central political institution or virtual government (Peterson, 1977). The Imam's office took heavy influence from the model of the tribal sheikh and embraced the idea of *primus inter pares* (first among equals). By the 18th century, the tribes of Oman were split into two political factions: the Ghafiri and the Hinawi (Alharthy, 1992). The conflict between the two groups stemmed from the division of desert tribes, *Bedu*, and city tribes, *Hadr*. At the time, sultans from the Al Said dynasty ruled coastal Oman while the Imams continued to hold power over the interior regions.

Oman continued to be an Imamate till the 20th century, when the death of an old Imam triggered a series of events that led to the collapse of the Imamate. By early 1959, all of Oman was brought under the Sultan's control and all the tribes pledged allegiance to him (Peterson, 1977).

Traditionally, almost all tribes in the interior of the Sultanate of Oman live in a specific region of their own called the *dira* (Carter, 1977). This practice carried on to the present where some towns in the country have been officially named according to their tribal affiliation, like Harat Al Zajdal associated with the Zadjali tribe or Qasabiyat Al Bu Said associated with the Bu Saidi tribe. Formation of new tribes is not exceptional, as is illustrated by the instance of the Baluchi tribe. As mentioned previously, the Baluch came from the Baluchistan region of Pakistan and settled in Oman many centuries ago, forming their own tribal unit akin to those of their Arab neighbors. Tribes can also be formed when they separate from their parent tribe, like in the case of the Al Bu Shamis tribe of the Buraymi region who detached themselves from their parent Nu'aym tribe (Peterson, 1977).

Tribal members depended on the natural resources of their *dira* for their survival, which naturally defined their lifestyle. Therefore, in the desert and mountain areas where water was scarce, people undertook Pastoral Nomadism, moving with their goats and camels to grazing pastures (Chatty, 1983). In regions where water was accessible, either as oases or *aflaj*, the inhabitants led a sedentary life by cultivating dates and vegetables, and those who lived close to the sea took up fishing. The *aflaj* are water systems that "access ground water by gravity flow from underground galleries or surface springs on neighbouring mountain slopes" (Norman et al., 1997, pp. 35).

In the present, this dependency on the tribal territory's resources has diminished considerably and instead been replaced by modern economic activities that generate income for the individuals. The *Hadr* and *Bedu* alike seek employment in the government, the oil industry, and other careers.

Even though the state has replaced the tribe as the primary political unit, it still relies heavily on various tribal components. One of them is the *Majlis Ash Shura*, which translates to Consultative Council. Shura is the process of consultation with tribal or community notables. In the case of the Omani government, representatives of each administrative region form the council in a sort of legislative assembly. Under the rule of the current Sultan (since 1970), there was no longer any dependency on the fealty and support of tribal figures. "Key posts were filled by men from merchant families, educated Omanis returning from exile under the old Sultan, and representatives of various other minority groups" (Peterson, 1977, p. 311). Tribal factions lost their significance in the national politics of Oman. However, tribal affiliation is still socially important. Members of a tribe get together during social and cultural occasions like marriages and funerals. Therefore, the tribe is still a strong unified force for families and individuals regardless if they were nearby or far away, and this in turn encourages the integration of people within the region and the country as a whole (Hoek, 2011).

2.3 An Overview of the Built Environment in Oman

This section introduces the Omani built environment and focuses on the domestic architecture of the general population, both vernacular and contemporary. In her book on the life of Omanis in the interior oases of Oman, Christine Eickelman (1984) made a simple classification of the households she visited. There were sheikhly households belonging to the Sheikh of the tribe, and non-sheikhly households, belonging to other

people. Since the basis for that classification pertains to the subject of this study, the term ‘sheikhly features’ was designated to characteristics that are unique to a sheikh’s house. These sheikhly features will not be included in this section but would be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

2.3.1 Vernacular Architecture

In his *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World,* Paul Oliver defines vernacular architecture as “built to meet specific needs, accommodating the values, economies and ways of life of the cultures that produce them” (1997). Oman, especially its inland region, shows a resilience of forms and customs which have resisted foreign influences over prolonged periods. As a result, many vernacular buildings are still standing, though they are almost dilapidated, their owners having deserted the former accommodations in favor of the newly developed and more ‘prestigious’ modern parts of towns and cities. The local vernacular architecture can be classified into various building typologies. There are defensive buildings such as forts and castles, religious buildings like mosques, and domestic buildings which include mainly houses (Abdul Majid et al., 2012). The first three types carry a common signature and analogous design regardless of location, examples of which can be seen in Figures 6, 7, 8 and 9 below. On the other hand, houses are more susceptible to variations as they have to fulfill the explicit requirements of the micro-climate and answer to the lifestyles of the local inhabitants.

Figure 6: Nakhal Castle [photograph]. Copyright 2019 by Mujahid Al-Saqri. Reprinted with permission

Figure 7: Khasab Castle [photograph]. Copyright 2019 by Mujahid Al-Saqri. Reprinted with permission

Figure 8: Muttrah Fort [photograph]. Copyright 2019 by Hussain Al-Bahrani. Reprinted with permission

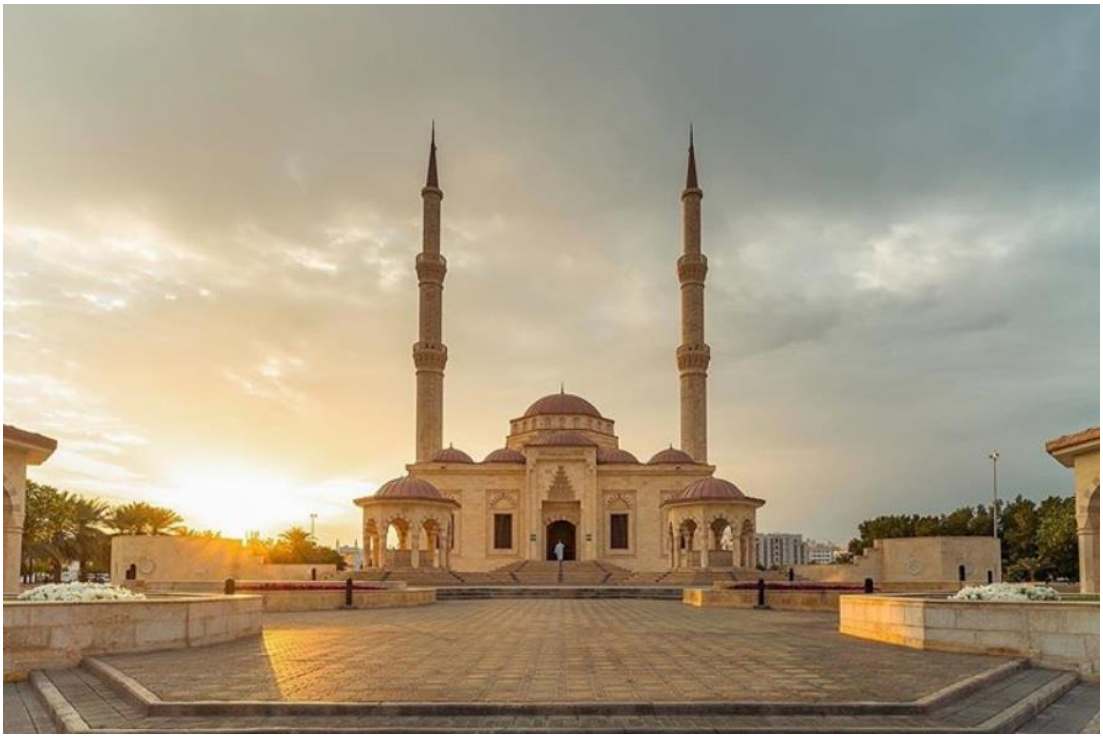

Figure 9: Said Bin Taimoor Mosque [photograph]. Copyright 2019 by Hussain Al-Bahrani. Reprinted with permission

General consensus among the various sources that dealt with vernacular Omani architecture is that house layouts were not pre-planned, very much like common vernacular examples around the world. Master builders would plan the layout *in situ* and proceed with the construction, however, the customary arrangement of rooms was relatively similar everywhere, leaving little room for variety of the plan's layout (A. Al-Mashani, personal communication, 2019; Damluji, 1998). The settlements themselves were situated in areas with arable land and centered around water sources (locally *Aflaj)* wherever possible (Al-Sharouni, 1990). Since the different regions in the country have varying conditions and topography, the domestic architecture of every region is discussed next.

2.3.1.1 Regional Domestic Architecture

Based on physical and socio-economic factors, there are four distinct regions in the country where a specific type of domestic architecture prevails. These are:

- Coastal
- Interior (desert/oasis)
- Mountainous
- The southern region of Dhofar (Abdul Majid et al., 2012).

2.3.1.1.1 Coastal Region

The coastal region, such as the Batinah Plain (refer to Figure 3) is marked by a hot and humid climate owing to its closeness to the sea and the locals here practiced farming and fishing. The houses were mainly made of palm fronds (locally *Arish*) which were ideal for the climate, or constructed out of other materials such as mud bricks, fired bricks, stone, and coral stone plastered with mud (Damluji, 1998). An example of such houses can be seen in Figure 10 and 11 below. The *arish* houses tended to be more spread out to respond positively to the climate, meaning they were oriented to catch

wind that assisted the evaporative cooling process (Abdul Majid et al., 2012). In some places, a single house had summer rooms made of *arish* and winter rooms made of *libin* (mud brick), with the tenants migrating seasonally between the rooms, as portrayed by the plan in Figure 12 (Cain, Afshar & Norton, 1975).

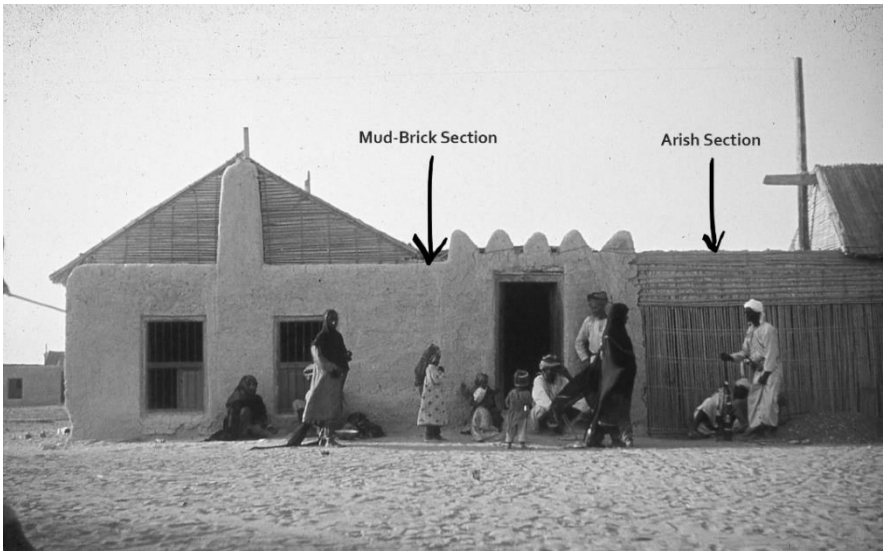

Figure 10: Traditional arish and mud brick house in Al Batinah. By Development Workshop Digital Archive, licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. Modified to include text and markings

Figure 11: Arish House in Sohar. By Development Workshop Digital Archive, licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0

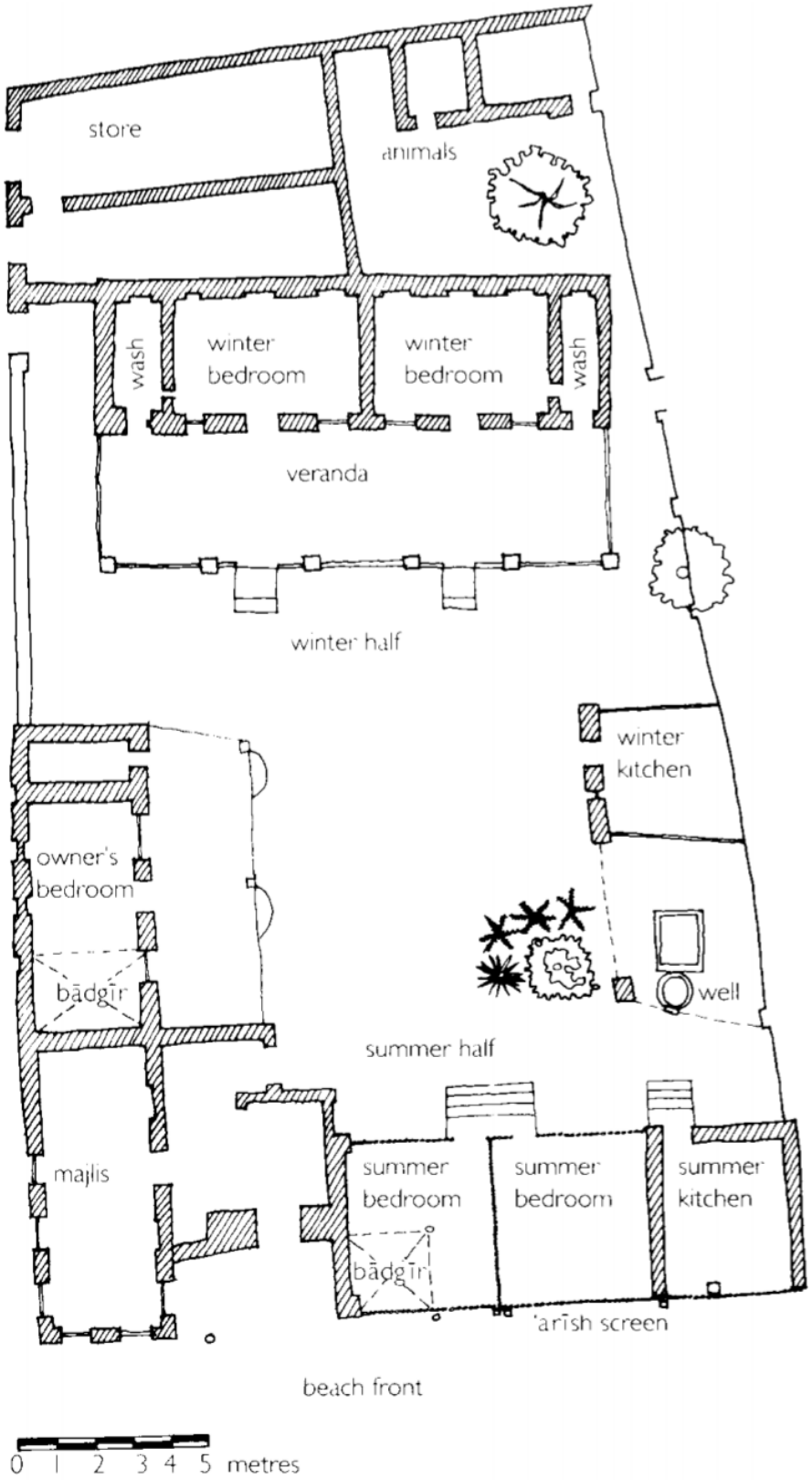

Figure 12: Floor plan showing summer and winter compartments in a coastal house. (Cain et al, 1975)

2.3.1.1.2 Interior Region

The houses in the interior region were mainly built from mud/baked bricks with thick walls to lessen the impact of solar radiation on the buildings and the residents, as seen in Figures 13 and 14 (Cain et al.; 1975). The walls on the ground floor would be two bricks wide (approximately 75cm to 90cm) and the thickness of the walls would decrease by half a brick for each successive floor, such that the third-floor wall's thickness was only one brick (Damluji, 1998). Small houses had pitched palm-frond roofs whereas the larger houses had flat earth roofs supported by palm trunks or mangrove poles (Abdul Majid et al., 2012).

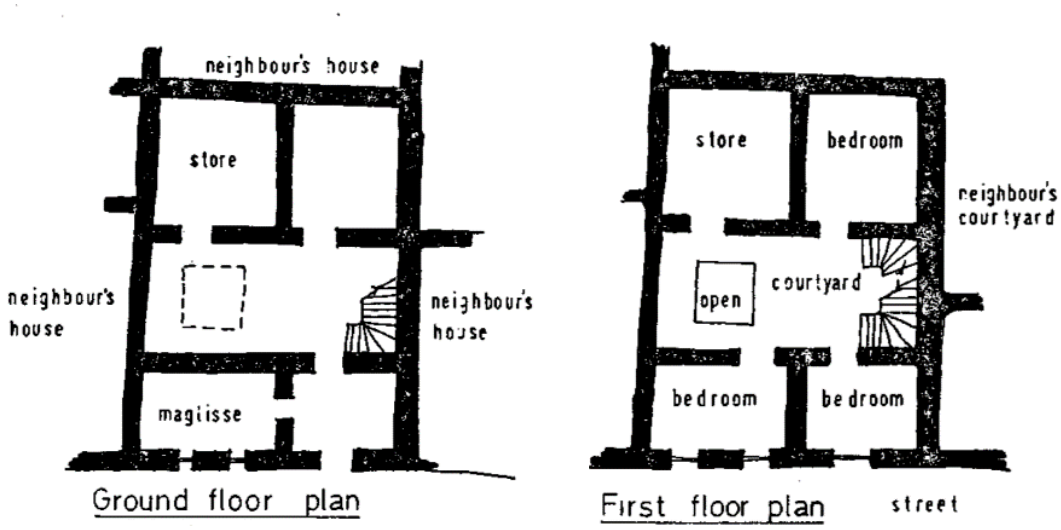

Figure 13: Ground and First floor plans of a house in the interior region.
From "Winter House in town: Nizwa" (Cain et al, 1975)

Figure 14: Mud-brick house in Nizwa. By Development Workshop Digital Archive, licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0

2.3.1.1.3 Mountainous region

In the mountainous areas, houses were built with stones which were locally abundant. They were compactly laid out and employed thick walls, ranging between 75cm to 1.5m in thickness, with ceiling heights rarely exceeding 2m (Damluji, 1998). Their floor layout is very similar to those of the interior region discussed above and thus have no distinct example.

2.3.1.1.4 Dhofar region

The traditional houses in the southern regions of Dhofar consisted of *arish* houses along the beach and large townhouses built from limestone could be found inland (Cain et al.; 1975). This area experienced strong prevailing winds that blew from the South. As a result, the south-facing walls of these houses would have multiple openings to take advantage of the wind's movement (Al-Hinai, 1994). So as not to deny their neighbors the same advantage, houses were situated apart just enough to allow the breeze to reach unobstructed (Cain et al.; 1975).

Rooms were developed around the stairwell, which was large enough to illuminate the spaces and was used as an interior courtyard (Al-Mashani, 1997). An illustration of the plan of a traditional Dhofari house as well as a visual example can be seen in Figures 15 and 16 below.

Figure 15: Traditional House in Taqa, Dhofar. By Development Workshop Digital Archive, licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0

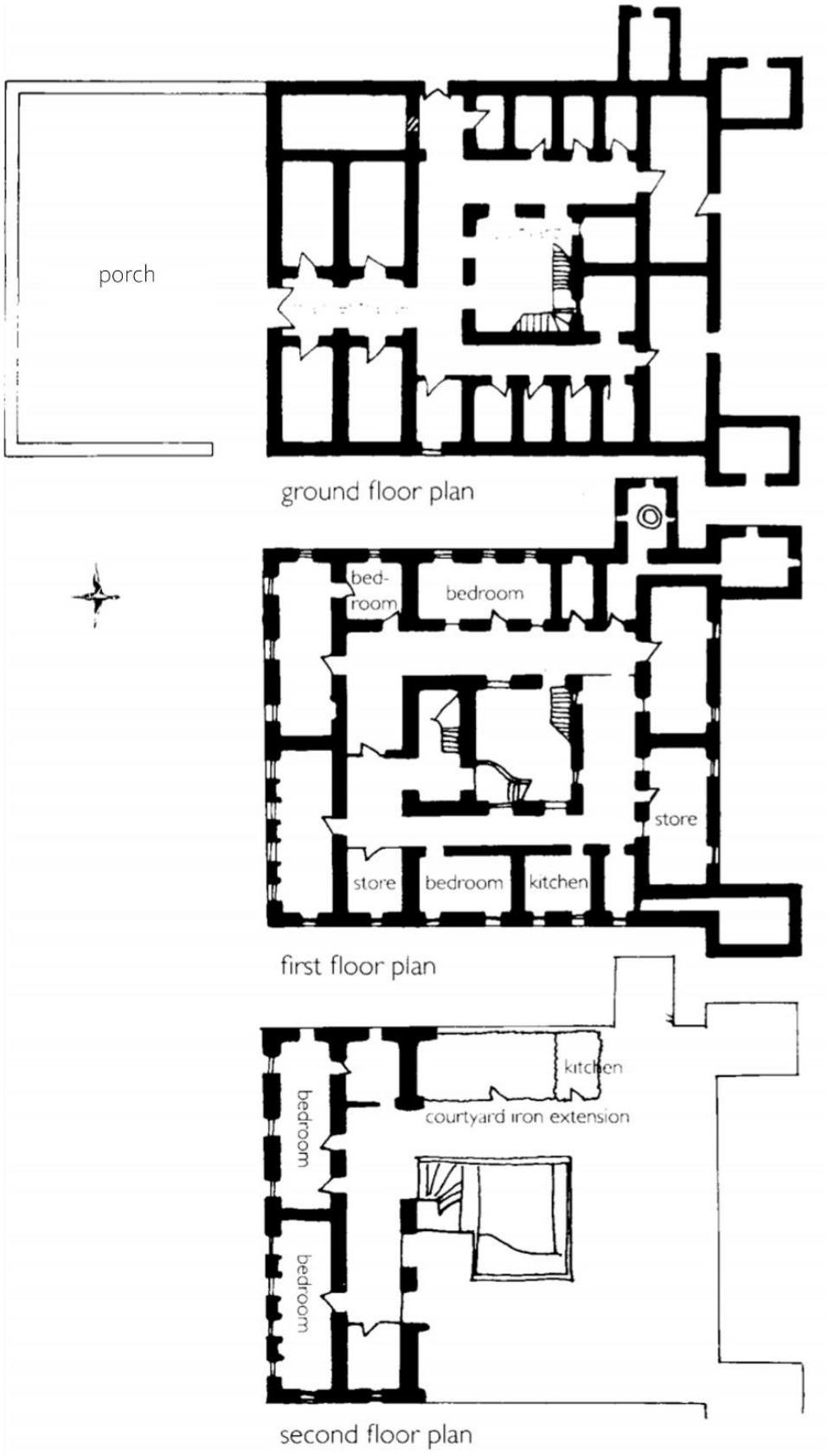

Figure 16: Floor plans of limestone house in Dhofar. By Development Workshop Digital Archive, licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0

Other than those mentioned above, two uniquely-Omani construction materials were also used by builders around the country, called *Saruj* and *Juss*. *Juss* was less common than *Saruj* and was only used in some parts of Eastern Oman, but they shared a similar method of preparation (Damluji, 1998). *Saruj* is a type of artificial pozzolana made by calcining clays (Al-Saidy, 2016) and its use in Oman dates back to the Sasanian presence in the area, before the advent of Islam (Al-Sharouni, 1990). Existing sources differ slightly in their explanation of the preparation of *Saruj*, which can be attributed to the fact that the *Saruj* makers who the information was originally obtained from had different techniques. Generally, it is made by first finding the right type of fine soil, which is left to soak or 'ferment' in water for a period up to two weeks (Damluji, 1998), which can be seen in Figure 17. It is then shaped into discs that are left to dry out completely, after which they are burnt on layers of dried palm tree trunks and small pieces of smooth, white valley stones (Al-Sharouni, 1990), both steps visible in Figures 18 and 19 respectively.

Figure 17: Saruj preparation - Soaking of raw material [Photograph]. Copyright 2007 by Emirates Natural History Group

Figure 18: Saruj Preparation – Shaped into discs the size of large plates. [Photograph]. Copyright 2007 by Emirates Natural History Group

Figure 19: Saruj Preparation – The discs are burned on layers of palm trunks. [Photograph]. Copyright 2007 by Emirates Natural History Group

After being burnt, the pieces are ground and mixed in equal proportions with sand, then beaten with water to form a paste (Al-Sharouni, 1990). *Juss* preparation followed a similar trajectory, but limestone was used instead of fine soil. The limestone would be burnt and ground, then mixed with sand and water at the construction site to be used immediately (Damluji, 1998). *Saruj* was mainly used as mortar between bricks or stones, or as a form of plaster for the walls, whereas *Juss* was used only as mortar.

2.3.1.2 General Features

Besides the differences in building materials, houses across the Sultanate had several common features. Clusters of houses, usually belonging to the same family or tribe were locally called '*Harat*' (sing. *Harah*), and were the predominant genus of settlements before the Omani Renaissance (Benkari, 2017). Near the entrance to the *harah*, one would find the *harah's* mosque and the '*Sablah*', which was a multi-functional, public male reception or meeting space (Alharthy, 1992). It was used for Quran classes, consultation with the Sheikh, sharing of news and stories, wedding and funeral gatherings, and even as shelter for travelers (Al-Sharouni, 1990). Houses usually had long, rectangular spaces called '*Dahariz*' which were well-ventilated and provided a cool shelter for the tenants in the hot hours of the day (Al-Hinai, 1994). Vernacular houses in Oman almost always comprised of two or three floors, whereas single-story houses were typically owned by under-privileged households. The ground floor was used mainly for storage and as a shelter for the family's livestock, and the walls were almost always devoid of any openings (Al-Rawas, 2016). Family members spent most of their indoor time in the upper floors, which housed their living quarters and 'verandahs' (locally *baranda*). In multi-story houses in Dhofar, the ground floor was called *Dahariz* since it consisted mainly of the similarly-named rooms (Al-Mashani, 1997).

Building facades were plain and had small openings (usually at a lower height than customary) with dual functionality, where they provided sufficient privacy to the inhabitants and brought in cool breeze (Al-Hinai, 1994). Omanis sat on the floor not just because it was customary among Arabs, but because it was cooler, considering the generally hot climate the country witnessed. They didn't use specialized, large furniture like beds and chairs, and rooms were small and flexible, meaning their function could change as required – living, dining, bedroom (Abdulac, 1982). The reason rooms were small and rarely exceeded 3m was because their size depended on the nature of timber available for the roof joists (Damluji, 1998; Al-Mashani, 1997).

Locals placed great importance on the design of entrance doors. In the past, doors were considered a sign of hospitality and were generally what gave off a visitor's first impression of their host. The decorated entrance door was (and still is) an important feature of Omani houses, sometimes colored vibrantly or carved with intricate patterns and motifs (Cain et al.; 1975). Another characteristic feature of Omani architecture that has stood the test of time is the use of crenellated parapets. Called *Shmis* or *Tabasheer,* they signified good tidings and were a cultural inheritance, functioning as a decorative ornament as well as a protective space to shoot from (Al-Rawas, 2016; Damluji, 1998). The arrangement and orientation of rooms towards the inner courtyard, the bent entrance (*majaz*), exterior screened windows (*mashrabiyya*), and wind catchers (*malqaf*) are all distinctive characteristics of the vernacular Omani house (Hegazy, 2015).

2.3.2 Contemporary Architecture

Following Sultan Qaboos' ascension to the throne in 1970 and the beginning of Oman's renaissance, there was a widespread introduction and use of mechanically air-conditioned, concrete-block buildings (Al-Hinai et al., 1993). The Oman Census in

2003 indicates that detached villas are now the most popular typology for new residential buildings (Taylor et al., 2009). However, Oman has preserved many aspects of its tradition and culture, and the current architectural trends in the country have also retained many of the same elements found in traditional buildings. This can be greatly attributed to the architectural guidelines published by the Diwan of the Royal Court over several years, the last of which was in 2003 (see Appendix C for a copy of the 1992 published version), which recommends architects to take notes from existing buildings around them and use them as models, such that they "impart an Omani character" to the new designs (Lasdun, 2006). The guidelines included restrictions on designing walls, doors, the types of masonry to be used (concrete blockwork or Omani calcium silicate bricks) with very limited use of stone, granite and marble, even the type of paint specified and the colors to be used for exterior walls (white light buff and silver grey), among other elements (Damluji, 1998). Elevations specifically have to be Islamic/Arab inspired or follow traditional Omani patterns. Typical contemporary houses had symmetrical façades, distinct entrances with arches and columns, and decorative cornices. Also, no one could get a building license from the municipality without checking the previous mentioned specifications (Hegazy, 2015). As a result, the architectural style of the country was controlled and traditional elements were preserved. However, this also meant less freedom in exhibiting personal preferences and an imposed uniformity on the urban landscape, making it almost comparable in appearance to the vernacular *harat* that used to dot the country. This point can be better envisaged when referring to Figures 20 and 21 below, both showing the same city's urban landscape 45 years apart.

Figure 20: Nizwa city, 1973. By Development Workshop Digital Archive, licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0

Figure 21: Nizwa City, 2018. By Sharon Ang, under free license

Prior to 1970, land distribution among Omanis was not regulated and one could claim land as his own if no disputes arose out of it. After Sultan Qaboos ascended to the throne in 1970, he issued multiple royal decrees that dictated the workings and legislations of the various ministries. Upon the issuance of Royal Decree no. 26/75 (see Appendix D), every Omani citizen gained the right to enter an annual draw prepared by the Ministry of Housing and ultimately receive a plot of land (Al-Gharibi, 2014). In a way, this land-allocation process shuffled the urban concentration of the different tribes due its random nature and slowly disintegrated the essence of *harat*. This meant that it now became harder to find members of the same tribe living close to each other.

Traditional houses used to be built with palm and are now built with cement blocks, but still follow nearly the same internal layout (Abdulac, 1982). Even though contemporary villas managed to preserve some traditional elements of Omani architecture, they fail from an energy-saving perspective where their vernacular counterparts succeeded. According to Von Richthofen (2015), “the ubiquitous detached villa is completely exposed to the sun and heat, and consumes vast quantities of energy in both its construction and maintenance.”

Chapter 3

THE IDENTIFICATION OF SHEIKHLY FEATURES IN THE HOUSES OF OMAN

After gaining a basic understanding of Oman's domestic architecture, this chapter delves deeper into the socio-political aspect of architecture and the sheikhly features that could be found in sheikhly households. As explained initially in the Limitations and Methodology sections of this thesis, five of the most populated governorates in the Sultanate had been visited. The map in Figure 22 below shows the visited regions highlighted in gray, as well the area of concentration of houses that were visited in each region. For each governorate, one sheikhly household and several non-sheikhly households belonging to the same tribe were studied. The research sought to determine if there were any architectural differences between a sheikh's house and the other tribesmen based on his social status as leader of that tribe. The subsequent sections of this chapter concentrate on one governorate each, starting with a general background on the region followed by detailed descriptions of the sheikhly and non-sheikhly houses.

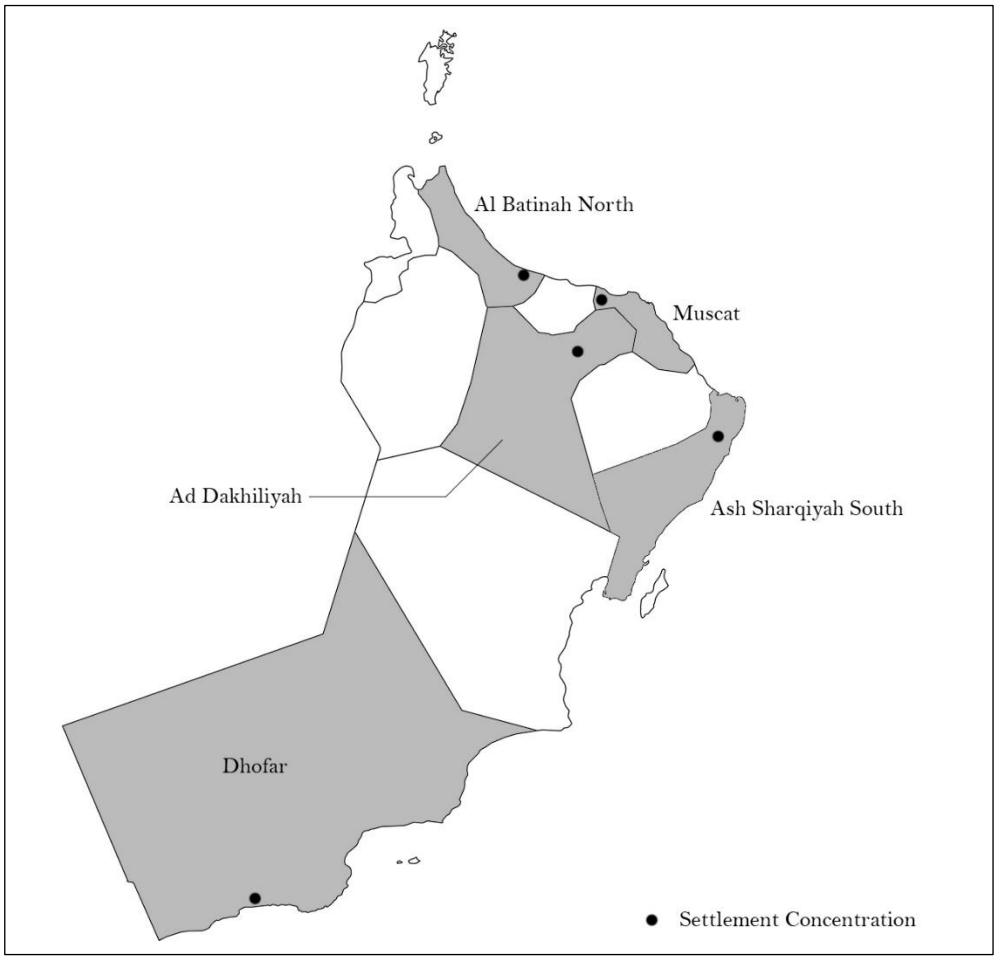

Figure 22: Map of Oman highlighting the studied regions and the location of visited houses in each

3.1 Muscat

Muscat is the most densely-populated governorate in the Sultanate. It has six *Wilayat,* among them Muscat city, the capital of Oman. This governorate has strong historical significance and administrative importance, since the country's administrative body has headquarters here, as well as having Al-Alam palace, one of the Sultan's royal residences. A large percentage of the national working population here actually hail from the neighboring governorates and go back to their hometowns over the weekend. For half the year from April to September, Muscat experiences hot and extremely humid weather where the temperature rarely drops below 40°C. The rest of the year is relatively cooler and the temperature sometimes drops below 20°C at night.

Most of the houses found in this governorate are multi-story buildings, usually two floors but sometimes three. Single-story houses are rare because the residential land area being distributed to the locals within that tight urban layout is getting more restricted every year. To put this into perspective, only 7.77% of the residential lands granted to Omanis in 2018 were in Muscat (National Centre for Statistics and Information, 2019). Coupled with the construction rules regarding property setback from the borders of the plot, actual available area for building is, at best, only about 60% of the land acquired. Consequently, owners have to resort to expanding vertically to comfortably accommodate their families.

3.1.1 The Sheikh's House (Appendix E: Case 1)

The two-story house was built in 1987 by the sheikh himself, occupying half of the large 800m^2 plot. Located in a purely residential area, it was a simple, white concrete-block construction that could easily blend in with the rest of the neighboring villas. The house was enclosed by a wall 2.5 meters high, with a large entrance gate meant for cars and a smaller one next to it for people. A wide front porch (~200m^2) preceded the building with ample space for car parking. The house's entrance door opened up to a transitional hallway and stairway leading to the first floor. The male *majlis* was to the right of the entrance, separated from the rest of the interiors by a door that can be accessed from the outside. There was also a female *majlis* to the left of the entrance, but was only accessible from inside the house. The presence of two *majalis* (sing. *Majlis)* dedicated to each gender is uncommon, as houses usually have a single *majlis* intended for entertaining visitors. This probably demonstrates the sheikh's wife's social standing as well, considering she had to welcome large numbers of female guests like her husband. The remaining space in the ground floor was taken up by a kitchen (which had a door to the outside), a living room, guest room and bathroom.

The first floor was completely private and comprised of four bedrooms. To the right of the main building was a small, separate kitchen and a covered corridor connecting it to the interior kitchen. As mentioned earlier, the exterior of the house looked typical of the contemporary villas dotting the neighborhood, and the main façade facing the street was plain and flat, except for the few varied window shapes and outdoor AC units. The enclosure gates, the entrance doors and the stair railing were all made of the same floral-patterned metal. The interiors were lively and there was an extensive use of color in the walls of the different rooms. There was no 'magnificence' or element of social difference that could be perceived from the sheikh's house. Built originally with his entire family in mind, only one nuclear family resided in the house at the time of visit; The sheikh's children all lived in their own villas.

3.1.2 Non-Sheikhly House #1 (Appendix E: Case 2)

This house was also located in a residential area, but was situated rather on the outskirts of the tightly-packed district. It was a three-story twin villa built in 2016 on a 300m^2 plot and occupied by a single nuclear family. A small, covered front porch led to the entrance door, which opened up to a long hallway and staircase. The *majlis* was immediately to the right of the entrance door, and had its own bathroom. It was smaller than the sheikh's *majlis* but seemed sufficiently-sized for its purpose. Going downstairs led to the dining hall (which had a door leading out to the outdoor kitchen) and a small guest room. Immediately upstairs was the living room, which took up nearly half of the floor's space and was bigger than the *majlis*. The rest of the floor consisted of two bedrooms (one with a balcony) and a preparatory kitchen. The floor above led to the roof access and had a small room used as a store. The outdoor kitchen could be accessed from the porch through a narrow passageway on the right. The participant mentioned that the area was deserted when the house was initially being

built, but had since grown into a big neighborhood. The house had a sleek, modern exterior with multiple textures of concrete, wood, stone and metal, and many large windows. The interiors also reflected the same style and could be mistaken for a western house if not for the few traditional touches around the villa, like the Arab seating in the living room.

3.1.3 Non-Sheikhly House #2 (Appendix E: Case 3)

This house was in the vicinity of the previous one, though the area was more densely-populated. It stood out with its pale-yellow finish and guardrails that resembled tree roots. The same pattern was found on the entrance gate and stair railings. Built in 2008 by the owner, it housed four nuclear families and consisted of three floors. The wall surrounding it was relatively low and painted with the same finish as the house's exterior walls. A large front porch took up a quarter of the 800m^2 plot and car parking was explicitly outside the enclosure walls. In the center of the plot was the main building, to the left was an exterior *majlis*, and to the right were the servants' quarters. The exterior *majlis* was used by family members simply as a change of pace sometimes or for outdoor gatherings, and the servant's quarters were unique to this household (the other houses did not have servant's quarters). At the front portico, two doors led inside the house – the door on the right led to a *majlis,* and the door in the middle led to a vestibule. The *majlis* was also accessible from the vestibule, which led to the other parts of the house. The first floor had a large room similar to a *majlis* that was used for occasions (as explained by the tenants) and connected to the dining hall below via a staircase. The floor above consisted solely of bedrooms. The kitchen on the ground floor opened out to the exterior *majlis* and an outdoor kitchen behind the house. Lots of attention was paid to the interior of the house and the ceilings were different in almost every room. The interior kitchen had a coffered ceiling, the event hall and

dining halls had wooden beams and intricate details reminiscent of traditional roofs, and the *majlis* and vestibule had decorative gypsum ceilings. Though it did not belong to a sheikh, this house had an exterior *majlis* and a dedicated event hall, both features uncommon to non-sheikhly households. This could be attributed to the owner's financial capability and frequency of socialization, which would entail the presence of these spaces.

3.2 Ad Dakhiliyah

Ad Dakhiliyah is a plateau in the northern part of Oman, stretching from the foothills of Jabal Akhdar, part of the Hajar mountains chain, down to the desert region in the south. It constitutes eight *Wilayat*, among them Nizwa which was once the capital city of the country. The region is well-known for its multiple valleys and *aflaj*, as well as historical forts and handicrafts. Ad Dakhiliyah experiences weather similar to that of Muscat albeit with much less humidity levels, except for the mountainous areas where the temperatures drop considerably. Though not the largest governorate by land area, Ad Dakhiliyah has consistently received the largest share of land allocated by the government to citizens over the past few years, according to the report published by the NCSI (2019). With the availability of *aflaj* to irrigate the land, many of the land owners in the region choose to grow crops on their own properties, while others own large plots of agricultural land and practice farming.

3.2.1 The Sheikh's House (Appendix F: Case 4)

It is more appropriate to title this an estate, rather than just a house. Situated in a densely-populated area of town, the sheikh owned a plot of land around 3000m^2 in size, of which around 1/3rd was built. The rest of the land was used for farming and grazing. At just 2 meters high, the perimeter wall surrounding the plot was surprisingly low. The interesting feature here was that all the built structures were separate entities,

likening it to a miniature *harah*. Initially built in 1985 by the sheikh's father, all that could be seen was built over the years as required. Five nuclear families lived there, meaning the place was inhabited by the same family, generation after generation. Immediately to the right of the entrance gate was the sheikh's house, and across the large courtyard to the left was another residence, belonging to one of the sheikh's sons. Facing the gate was the *majlis* and to its left was a dirt road leading to the rest of the small houses in the estate. Each building had slight façade differences and none of them looked identical, except that they were all single-story buildings. Unsurprisingly, the *majlis* was the one with the most façade treatment, sporting an arched entryway, multiple wall textures and a crenellated parapet. This could imply that a greater importance was placed on the appearance of the *majlis* over the house and other attachments, possibly because it was what visitors first saw upon entering. In a way, the *majlis* here could be compared to the traditional Omani entrance door, whose cultural importance was discussed in the previous chapter. The entrance gate itself and the other buildings were plain, without any noticeable aesthetic elements.

3.2.2 Non-Sheikhly House #1 (Appendix F: Case 5)

This house was isolated away from most other houses and buildings, and had to be reached via a narrow side road off the main street. The owner's father constructed the house in 1987 on a plot of land around 1500m^2 in size, half of which was used for farming. However, the house itself occupied only around 350m^2. As customary, a perimeter wall lined the area, with some welcoming vegetation near the entrance. The entrance gate was a small, patterned metal door that did not lead directly to the interiors of the house and rather forced visitors to make a couple of turns prior to that. A right turn at that point would bring one to the farm area of the house, where the owners grew date palm and vegetables, and a left turn led to the residence itself.

The house was split into two easily-identifiable parts – the primary construction and the newer addition. Both were single-story buildings that shared a wall. The primary construction was what the owner's father built originally and closely resembled the vernacular houses of the region. However, it was built from concrete and the walls were painted a light shade of pink. A blue, metal door led to an open inner courtyard around which other rooms were centered. To the left of this entrance was a small staircase leading up to the roof. On the right, one door led to a very small *majlis*, probably indicating the family did not receive many visitors, and another door opened up to the living room. The living room had only one window overlooking the courtyard and led to two small bedrooms. All of these spaces had low ceilings and no furniture, except for some pillows that were propped up against the inner walls of the living room in a form of Arab seating. Opposite the courtyard's entrance door and next to the living room was the kitchen, which was preceded by a small storage space. The kitchen was spacious and well-illuminated, and was also where the family gathered for their meals. Adjacent to the kitchen area was a bathroom, easily spotted with its contrasting white aluminum door (all other rooms had plain, brown wooden doors). To the left of the courtyard was part of the new construction, a narrow room with no specific function except that it had two couches placed facing each other. The rest of the new addition could be accessed from the exterior courtyard. This area was unpaved, apparently used as a playground by the children. A small, makeshift sitting area was at the corner, made of carpets placed on the gravel and metal rods holding up an *arish* roof. This space was used by the tenants for evening tea or to watch over the children as they played.

The exterior façades of the house were flat and plain, save for the few windows dotting the wall. A motif-carved parapet surrounded the roof of the old building, while the new addition had no such feature. The window frames of the older construction were

very small, made of iron and showed signs of aging, whereas the recent construction had bigger openings framed with white aluminum. This house exhibited many features of a traditional Omani house and utilized most of the available spaces efficiently. The house seemed to have been built to accommodate more than one family which was primarily true, however, at the time of visit only one nuclear family resided at the house.

3.2.3 Non-Sheikhly House #2 (Appendix F: Case 6)

Sharing many features with the previous house, this single-story residence was located in a livelier part of town, a mainly residential area with a few shops around, and was easily accessible from the main road. The plot on which the house was built was slightly larger than its predecessor, at around 1000m^2 in size. The proportion of farm to built area, however, was rather skewed, with only 300m^2 of the plot used for the house, and the rest as farmland. An interesting fact about the house is that it was not built by the owners, but was actually bought around 40 years ago by them and later added upon to accommodate the whole family as it grew. Upon entering the premises, one was immediately met with the small *majlis*, where visitors would be received. To the right was the inner courtyard and the rest of the house. The courtyard was partly covered by metal sheets, akin to a parking shade. The long, rectangular living room was distinguishable by its intricately-decorated, short metal door. Just as in the previous house, the living room gave access to two bedrooms, the layout and size of rooms was similar, there was a glaring lack of furniture and the ceilings were low. The kitchen and bathroom were separate, as was the newer addition to the house, which consisted of two bedrooms with a shared bathroom between them and a store. Again, there was a difference to be noted between the original house and its newer counterpart,

with the newer built in a more contemporary style and included furniture. Only one nuclear family lived in this house, but was big enough to warrant the extra rooms.

3.2.4 Non-Sheikhly House #3 (Appendix F: Case 7)

The most recently built out of the houses in this region, this house was designed and commissioned by the owner in 2016. It occupied half of the 600m^2 plot and was three stories high. Situated in a developing part of the outskirts, the contemporary house's white and gray walls stood in sharp contrast against the picturesque backdrop of the Hajar mountain range. From the outside, it was plain to see how much effort the owner invested in designing the house. The front façade had the most work, employing grooves, moldings, regularly-spaced slit windows and ashlar stone at the two entrances. The main entrance to the house was in the center of the façade, and the entrance to the *majlis* was on the right end. Wash basins and a guest bathroom were placed outside by the *majlis* door, giving tenants the full freedom of movement inside the house without worrying about crossing paths with the guests. The main entrance opened to a corridor, with a second *majlis* found immediately to the left of the entrance that was mainly used as a female reception area. Towards the middle of the house, there was a large living room on the left and a staircase leading to the upper floor on the right. The space under the stairs was large enough to be considered a corridor, and connected the *majlis* with the rest of the interiors. The living room was not entirely closed, but rather sectioned off by a small ashlar wall and had no doors. At the end of the corridor was the kitchen, also used as a dining space by the tenants like the other households, and a guest bedroom. The upper floor consisted of bedrooms only. All the doors in the house that opened up to rooms were thick, decorated wooden doors, and utility doors like those for bathrooms and roof access were white aluminum. Nearly every interior wall was decorated with panels and moldings, and the gypsum ceilings

varied in design from room to room. Islamic geometric patterns could be found nearly everywhere, including the stair railings and the ceilings in the corridors. Unlike the other non-sheikhly households, this house blended traditional and modern elements in the right balance and with purpose. This could be attributed to several factors such as difference in the level of education acquired by the respective owners, a difference in their ages when the houses were built (and by extension, their grasp on current trends), or different economic situations.

3.3 Al Batinah (North)

Bordering the United Arab Emirates, the coastal governorate of northern Al Batinah is part of the fertile Batinah strip. It has 6 *Wilayat* including Sohar, which is an important port of trade and hub of construction, industry and agriculture. The weather is generally the same throughout the northern region of the country. Although Al Batinah shares Muscat's humidity levels, the coastal breeze, lower urban density and population in the governorate all contribute to making the weather more acceptable. A large percentage of the people living in this region are nationals, compared to Muscat where expatriates are nearly double the number of Omanis. This implies a stronger attachment to traditions which could be seen in the general lifestyle of the people here, including their career choices, urban patterns, and strength of social relationships. The population density here is also very high, coming second to Muscat.

3.3.1 The Sheikh's House (Appendix G: Case 8)

Built nearly thirty years ago by his father, the sheikh's house was situated on a large plot of land, close to 3000m^2. According to the sheikh, most of the lands in the area belonged to his grandfather, who proclaimed them as his own at a time when supervision over these matters did not exist. Once people started moving to town from the mountains, land was distributed to them and only a small portion remained with

the family. However, most of the houses in the area belonged to the same tribe, akin to a *harah*, and thus the town was named after that tribe. All the buildings on the plot are single-story, with a combined built area of around 650m^2. As in previous cases, the rest of the land was used for farming. The sheikh also owned a small piece of grazing land a short distance away from the house. Guests had easy access to the *majlis*, which was immediately to the left of the entrance gate. This was the first case where the *majlis* was separate from the house. Right behind the *majlis* was a dedicated parking space for the household's cars, and after that the extension to the house, built after the main house by several years. The main house was on the right and comprised of a living room, five bedrooms, kitchen and semi-enclosed courtyard. The extension unit was basically a smaller house which consisted of its own living room and kitchen, as well as two bedrooms. In total, the sheikh's household consisted of six nuclear families at the time. The two houses had the same general exterior style - concrete constructions with beige walls and burnt sienna accents at every window. The walls showed slight signs of deterioration, but other than that, they were flat, simple, and lacked ornamentation. The *majlis*, however, was slightly different. Its walls were painted a shade of terracotta, the window accents were burgundy, and a decorative column was placed at its entrance. Though similarly plain, the *majlis* was distinguished from the other household structures in this way, suggesting its greater significance. The whole plot was unpaved - one had to walk over gravel to get from one building to another, unlike all the previous cases.

3.3.2 Non-Sheikhly House #1 (Appendix G: Case 9)

Adjacent to the sheikh's plot, this house was flamboyant and clearly from a different time than the former. Built in 2010 by the owner on a 600m^2 plot, it exhibited characteristics of a typical contemporary Omani house. The most striking feature was

the extensive use of green on the façade. There were green intervals in the beige marble-cladded walls, the windows were tinted a bright shade of green, and the columns at the main entrance and guest entrance were completely painted green. The large iron gate leading into the premises had green parts as well, while the arabesque panels found beneath each window and on the perimeter wall were of the same shade. All entrance doors were heavily decorated, as were the interiors. A large *majlis* was on the right, and was the only part of the house that was a single story high. As in other multi-story houses, the upper floor consisted of only bedrooms.

3.3.3 Non-Sheikhly House #2 (Appendix G: Case 10)

Another contemporary house, this one was about a hundred meters down the road from the previous house. The owner had it built in 2006 for his single nuclear family, on a plot about 850m^2 large. Likewise two stories high, it had a pronounced, arched, double-volume entrance that had two doors – one for the *majlis* and the other to the rest of the house. The concrete walls were painted white with accents of terracotta on the window moldings and columns, while the walls at the entrance had stone cladding. Just as in the previous case, the windows here were tinted but in a blue shade. Towards the left end of the plot was a large parking shade for the family cars and small gazebo used by the family for outdoor time. The *majlis* here was also part of the house and not a separate unit. The layout of the remaining rooms was similar to the previous house.

3.4 Dhofar

Dhofar is the largest governorate in the Sultanate in terms of area, covering nearly 100,000km^2 of mountains, fertile plain and deserts. It was and still is a major port of trade in the southern part of the country, where agriculture and fishing are practiced most by the locals. Dhofar also has ten *Wilayat,* the most out of all the other governorates, as well as being one of the least densely populated regions. Salalah, the

capital of the governorate and its largest city, has its own international airport and attracts a large number of tourists every year to its lush green plains, natural springs and favorable summer weather. Unlike its northern counterparts, Dhofar does not experience extreme weather conditions. The temperatures rarely exceed 35°C and in the summer from June to August, the *Khareef* season's light rain showers cool the region even further.

3.4.1 The Sheikh's House (Appendix I: Case 11)

One of the oldest and largest houses out of those visited for this thesis, the sheikh had his house built in 1976 on a very large plot measuring 3 *feddan*, which equals about 12600m^2. The house was in an area that was locally known by the tribe's name, similar to the town discussed previously in Al Batinah North governorate. The surrounding area itself was on the perimeter of the city center and almost always bustling with people and cars. A petrol station was right next to the plot, and opposite to it was a mosque. The plot consisted of the main house, an event hall, an apartment building, servants' quarters, a large garden gazebo and a fountain by the main entrance.

There were four different entrances to the area, each serving a specific part of the plot. The main, private entrance was the farthest away from the house and accessible via the road between the plot and the adjacent petrol station. It was a large, imposing entrance that prompted images of traditional Omani city gates welcoming visitors to a particular city. The tall, wooden entrance doors were followed by two sculptures of seated lions on either side of the street that evoked a strong sense of opulence. This was, however, a rare sight as sculptures in the form of animate objects were not commonly seen in Islamic societies. The entrance structure itself was decorated with eight-pointed stars inlaid with floral motifs and a traditional crenellated parapet ran across the top. The road curved after the lion sculptures, leading towards the house and

accompanying structures, similar to the bent *majaz* in traditional houses. The three other entrances were at the back of the house and easily accessible from the main road. Two were wooden doors that led into the premises; one for the house and the other for the event hall. The final entrance was a metal gate providing access to the private parking area inside, in addition to being an entrance for the apartment building.

The house consisted of three floors in total and was the product of various stages of additions over the last forty years. Spanning an area approximately 1000m^2 in size, the house had five nuclear families living in it at the time, with further room for two more families that occasionally visited and stayed with them. It consisted of discrete wings and individual rooms that were spread across all three floors. The glass portico-like entrance to the house was spacious and inviting, and featured Quranic scripts in gold right above. This was a transitional space that softened the shift from the open exterior to the secluded interior spaces. Similar to the entrance, a long, narrow corridor could be found at the back of the house that was also surrounded by glass and columns, and served as a recreational space for the tenants. For the sake of simplification, the ground floor could be divided into three sections that were connected by long corridors: Left, Right and Center. On the left was the main *majlis,* the kitchen, a smaller preparatory kitchen, dining room, one bedroom and two bathrooms. The *majlis* was the closest to the main entrance and had expansive windows taking up over 50% of the overall wall space. The other rooms in this section were at the end of the hallway.

The kitchen was also the only room in the house that could be accessed from outside. Directly opposite the main *majlis* was the central section, which consisted of a living room and three bedrooms, as well as the central staircase of the house and an elevator. The previously-mentioned recreational area at the back of the house could be accessed

from the living room in this section. A wide corridor gave way to the three rooms and connected this part of the floor to the right section. In the right section, a second, smaller *majlis* could be found, which was used to entertain close friends and family. There were also two bedrooms, another living room, four bathrooms, and one of the family wings. A secondary staircase existed which was accessible from one of the rooms in the central section as well as from the recreational area. This staircase was used primarily by the family occupying one of the wings directly above on the first floor, since it provided easier, shorter access to their section. The first floor was smaller than the ground floor and took up nearly 60% of the latter's area. It consisted of two wings - one at each staircase, four bedrooms and one bathroom. The wings varied in the number of bedrooms but each had their own living room and kitchen.

A rarely-used living room on this floor sat right above the one on the ground floor, and was actually declared to be more of an antique gallery than a practical living room. Most of the items and furniture in this room were very old pieces collected by the family over the years. The second floor was even smaller than the first, and was made up of a living room, two bedrooms and a bathroom. Another point to note was the separation of spaces in the house according to gender and age rather than nuclear family. What this meant was that instead of certain parts of the house belonging to a certain nuclear family and thereby keeping direct blood relations close, the members of the entire family were scattered throughout the house. As a testament to the tight relationship shared by them, every member of the family was able to freely move around the house, without the distinction of privacy that came with having separate familial areas.

Since the young men in the household were significantly greater in number than the ladies, they occupied a fair share of the individual rooms on the first and second floors of the house. The wings were used by families with younger children.

The concrete exterior of the house was simple and barely embellished, except for the entrance scriptures and crenellated parapet, which conveyed a simplicity and ode to traditional building techniques. The interiors, however, were the complete opposite of the exterior and did not reflect the same values. It was apparent how much effort the tenants put into decorating and customizing their home on the inside. There was a near-excessive amount of furniture, the gypsum ceilings were intricately patterned, some walls were clad with different types of stone, and every single space in the house was utilized in one way or the other, including the bottoms of staircases. Also, none of the other houses visited for this research had featured an elevator, which was an element unique to this one.

3.4.2 Non-Sheikhly House #1 (Appendix I: Case 12)

This house was in a completely different area than the Sheikh's, and was different from the other cases in this research due to the fact that it was part of a bigger compound and not a singular, free-standing building. The original structure was built in 1980, but the section studied in this case – the apartment on the second floor, was constructed in 1994. Situated in a mixed-use part of town, the multi-floor buildings here utilized the ground floor commercially and the rest of the floors as accommodations. This house followed the same concept, where the ground floor of the three-story building was a bakery and the owner's family lived in the remaining two floors. It was, however, part of several buildings within a compound, all of which belonged to the same family. The apartment spanned an area of about 500m^2, which was bigger than some of the free-standing houses previously discussed. The entrance opened up to the living room

which acted as the central node in the house, from which other spaces branched out. Immediately to the right was the *majlis*, but was used more as an office by the tenant rather than a reception area. In that regard, the living room doubled as the *majlis* since it was also the first room accessible from the entrance door. Beyond the office space was a room with an *en suite* bathroom and closet space. The kitchen was opposite the entrance door and was relatively small, with its own storage space and a door that led out from the kitchen to the roof access. Behind the living room was a small bedroom also with its own bathroom, used by the family as the infant's playroom. The left part of the house consisted of two bedrooms and bathrooms, another small living room, and a dressing room. Despite its large size, the house was simple both from the outside and inside. Except for some wallpaper and crown molding, there was not much to be said about the ornamentation employed in the house, and the exterior of the building showed signs of weathering.

3.4.3 Non-Sheikhly House #2 (Appendix I: Case 13)

A fair distance from the city center, the second non-sheikhly house was occupied by a single but large nuclear family. The owner built the house in 2002 on a plot stretching 2400m^2, of which 600m^2 was used up for the buildings on it. There was a two-story house and a long, rectangular separate *majlis*, used primarily for events or large gatherings. Like the large event hall in one of the non-sheikhly houses in Muscat, the uncommon presence of this exterior *majlis* denoted a financial capability and large social circle that permitted the owner to have it alongside the house. The *majlis* had a second floor that took up a very small portion of its base area and was used as a guest suite. About a third of the land was outside the perimeter walls and offered a large, attractive precursor to the paved courtyard beyond the entrance gates. The entrance gate was an impressive metalwork with two small doors on either side and a large

central one for car passage. To the left of the entrance were the parking umbrellas and grassy yard, and on the right was the house. The separate *majlis* was in the middle and could be accessed from the main front entrance or the side entrance that also led upstairs to the guest suite. The house had a large portico-style entrance that opened up to a long and wide hallway. To the right was the house's *majlis*, which extended further to the back of the house and included a bathroom. At the end of the entrance hall was the stairwell, with wide stairs leading up to the first floor and a small sitting area placed under the staircase. To the left of the stairwell were the dining hall and kitchen, which were connected via a short corridor, and the living room that was separated from the other two by a small bathroom. The first floor consisted of four bedrooms and bathrooms, and the stairs continued towards the roof access.

The general appearance of the house and *majlis* exuded an air of simplicity and elegance, achieved through the use of traditional forms in a contemporary style. The exterior concrete walls were painted a pastel shade of peach with accents of white. Islamic-patterned carvings of varying shapes accompanied the windows and covered much of the house's main façade. All the windows were large and tinted, and some form of *mashrabiyya* could be observed on the right and left façades of the house. The roof parapets sported a simpler version of the classic *tabasheer* that kept in line with traditional designs. As for the interiors, an extensive amount of woodwork could be noticed in both the house and exterior *majlis*. The window framework on the inside, the grand entrance doors, wall panels and the wooden balustrade of the stairs were all remarkable works of carved wood. The gypsum ceiling of the *majlis* was also striking, with a great amount of detail observable in its intricate design.

3.4.4 Non-Sheikhly House #3 (Appendix I: Case 14)

Situated in yet another part of town, this house was in a relatively quiet area with not many neighbors or buildings around. The plot was massive, covering an area of about 3000m^2, most of which was taken up by the courtyard, while the house itself used up roughly 800m^2 and had two floors. It was a young construction, built in 2013 by the owner for his single nuclear family. There were three entrances to the house that led to the reception area: the large main entrance door in the center of the façade, a small door on the left that opened straight into the *majlis*, and another door on the right that was followed by a long corridor but also led to the same *majlis*. The stairs leading up to the main entrance were impressively wide and commanded attention. Right above the main entrance was a balcony, a feature similarly found in a previous case in Al Batinah region. However, since the house was located in a relatively remote area and the balcony looked out on the inner courtyard, the tenants' privacy was protected. The *majlis* took up most of the left half of the ground floor's area and the rest consisted of a bathroom and guest room.

Immediately to the right of the main entrance door, there was another smaller majlis with its own bathroom. The staircase leading to the upper floor was at the opposite end of the house from the entrance and featured a small sitting area. The living room was to the right of the staircase, followed by a large kitchen which was also where the family members dined. The upper floor consisted of only bedrooms, of which there were 6 in total. To the right of the main building was a smaller, single-story 2-room building that was connected to the former by a narrow, covered passage. The owner employed multiple decorative elements to the interiors and exteriors of the house. First, the popular portico entrance and the rest of the front façade were dominated by double-floor height white columns. On the same note, the wall moldings around the windows

repeated the pattern of columns in front of them. The large windows covering the façade were tinted a shade of green and the walls were clad with large stone panels. This was one of the houses that did not sport the popular crenellated parapet for the roof, but instead had a simple polymer balustrade. The interiors featured many arches and decorative gypsum ceilings, as well as wall panels and moldings.

3.5 Ash Sharqiyah (South)

Named after its easterly location, Ash Sharqiyah is on the eastern coast of the Sultanate, facing the Indian Ocean. Its strategic position has made it an important port of trade, and a hub for ship building which the city of Sur is famous for. The governorate has four other *Wilayat* besides Sur, and the people practice fishing, handicrafts and agriculture. Like Ad Dakhiliyah, Ash Sharqiyah is known for its *aflaj* and forts, dating back to several hundred years ago. The general weather and temperatures here are comparable to those experienced in Al Batinah, since they share a similar coastal location.

3.5.1 The Sheikh's House (Appendix H: Case 15)

The Sheikh lived on an 800m^2 plot sandwiched between others in a relatively dense residential part of the city. The house itself was about 250m^2 in size, accompanied by a small *khayma* (tent) and an exterior *majlis* that brought the total built area to 350m^2. Built in 2006 for the sheikh's singular nuclear family, they were all single-story structures, which was common for the region even for newer constructions. The plot was divided from its neighbors by a high perimeter wall with three metal entrances – one for the *majlis*, a large gate for car access, and a smaller door next to the gate leading in to the unpaved courtyard of the house. The *majlis* had its own entrance and bathroom, and was situated very close to the perimeter on the left. On the other hand, the house was at the back of the plot and was separated from the *majlis* by about 10m.

Directly in front of the house was a small, aluminum structure that resembled a temporary shelter. The sheikh furnished its interior in the style of a traditional Arabic tent called a *khayma*. It was used by him when he was obliged to receive only a small number of guests, so it acted in a way like a miniature *majlis*. The main door to the house was preceded by the common Omani portico, where the floor was covered by artificial grass. The choice of flooring contrasted with the gravel of the unpaved courtyard, but at the same time contributed to the homogeneity of the few trees and bushes growing around the house.

The entrance opened up to the living room, which acted as a hallway that in turn led to the rest of the house. On the right were two bedrooms, and in the center beyond the living room was another bedroom and a bathroom. The left section of the house consisted of a hallway which could be accessed from outside, and led to the kitchen, its store, and servant's quarters. Besides the aluminum *khayma*, the house and *majlis* were typical concrete constructions that were simple and minimalistic. The walls both inside and outside were painted a light shade of beige, and the only ornamentation that could be witnessed in the construction was the slightly decorative crown molding of the interior walls.

3.5.2 Non-Sheikhly House #1 (Appendix H: Case 16)

Only a short distance away from the sheikh's house, this house was built in 2013 by the owner for his small family. It was a rather small house in comparison to most of the other houses in this research – a 200m^2 single-story construction on a plot double that size. Enclosed by a high concrete perimeter wall, the courtyard of the villa could be accessed via a wide metal gate at the right corner. Three small steps led up to the building's two entrances, one for the *majlis* and one for the rest of the house. The *majlis,* though attached to the building, was only accessible from that solitary door. It

was on the right side of the house and also had its own bathroom. The main entrance door and the *majlis* door were separated by a high wall that may have been intended to provide greater privacy. Beyond the main entrance door was a long hallway with rooms on either side of it. Immediately to the left was the living room, which only had an arched entryway into it. A little further down the hall were two bedrooms on the left and a kitchen with its store on the right. The bathroom and a third bedroom were at the end of the hallway.

The general appearance of the house was typical of contemporary Omani houses, although it displayed certain eclectic elements. The building and perimeter walls were painted chartreuse with slightly darker accents, an uncommon color choice. The columns of both the portico entrances were a burnt sienna, and the panels above the door frames were painted a combination of yellow and green, all of which did not blend well appealingly. Also, several floor tile patterns were used in the front courtyard that displayed no consistency or reason. All of these reflected the owner's eagerness in approaching the design of the house, however wanting it may have been. The interiors were also simple with minimal decorative elements and furnishings.

3.5.3 Non-Sheikhly House #2 (Appendix H: Case 17)

This house was situated right next to the previous one, and upon first sight displayed a similar method of unabashed color use. However, what set this house apart from its counterparts was the fact that it was actually initially built by the government. Probably as part of a mass housing project, the current tenants first inhabited the house and later had the ownership transferred to them. It was built in 2014 in the style of a typical contemporary house. The perimeter walls and the building walls were painted the same shade of beige, and there were a few accents in burnt sienna that seemed to be a recurring choice of color. The metal entrance gate, however, was painted an eye-

catching green and yellow which made it easier for guests to find the house. The courtyard of the house stretched a few meters beyond the entrance gate and was another unpaved strip of gravel. Though not in the style of a portico, the main entrance to the house was highlighted by its slight protrusion from the other walls and its accented paint job. The house took up a huge portion of the 400m^2 plot, covering an area just shy of 300m^2 and leaving a very tiny gap between the perimeter walls and the building. This utilization of the plot was not previously noticed in any other case and seems to be in direct contradiction with general building offset regulations. However, the fact remains that the house was built under government directives. The main entrance had two doors – in the center was the house's entrance door and on the right was the *majlis* door.

The *majlis* was attached to the house but at the same time isolated from it, just as in the previous case. However, unlike its counterpart, this *majlis* did not consist of anything but the reception space. The main door to the house opened up to the living room, and on the right were a bedroom and bathroom. Immediately to the left of the entrance were the stairs for roof access, and the corridor beyond them led to the kitchen and another bedroom. It seemed to be a common occurrence for the houses in this region to have a single bathroom for the entire household, probably attributed to the generally small size of the inhabiting family. The interiors of the house followed the trend of the area, where all the elements were bare and simple, and the floors were generally carpeted wherever possible.

3.5.4 Non-Sheikhly House #3 (Appendix H: Case 18)

The final case study in this research was in the same neighborhood as the previous houses but a short walking distance away from them. The single-story property was old, built in 1990 by the owner on a large plot about 600m^2 in size. However, the actual

built area was the smallest among all the studied cases at only about 150m^2. An old, worn-out wooden door provided entrance to the compound from the left corner of the plot. It opened out to an unpaved road, which constituted the exterior part of the property and was covered for a short distance with metal sheets. Immediately to the right was the *majlis* door, and further down the path was the short wall enclosing the inner courtyard and the compound. The *majlis* was narrow and small, and had another door leading to the living room of the house. The living room, in turn, led to two bedrooms and also had a door opening up to the courtyard. If one were to continue down the unpaved exterior path and circle the compound, the courtyard could be accessed from a gate that was at the back of compound.

The kitchen and its store were to the right of the living room and attached to the rest of the accommodation, but were only accessible from the courtyard. Strange as it may seem for a mere twenty-year old construction plan, the bathroom was separated from the house and placed at the far-right corner of the compound. This was a feature unheard of in the region and was reminiscent of extremely outdated vernacular building patterns. Also, the plan of the house largely resembled those found in the Ad Dakhiliyah region, where a narrow living room opened up to two bedrooms and the kitchen was a separate entity. By far the humblest of the studied houses, the walls of the house were left bare without paint and exhibited no decorative elements whatsoever, the interiors contained the bare minimum, and the few windows that were present were small and covered with metal grates. Besides the overt minimalism, the house did share some common elements with the previous cases, such as the gravel courtyard and carpeted interior floors.

Chapter 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In total, eighteen different houses were visited and studied. On average, the sheikh's house in every governorate was compared against three non-sheikhly houses belonging to the same tribe. Similarly, all five sheikhly houses were assessed alongside each other and the common features between them were inferred. The analysis was condensed to a table (Table 1) that simplified and presented the most significant elements of the collected data. The detailed observations and results for each governorate are discussed below, after the general outlook on the data.

The sheikhly houses were largely located near the houses of other members of the tribe, much like a traditional *harah*. This example could be seen clearly in the case of Al Batinah (North) and less evidently in Ad Dakhiliyah. Figure 23 below shows the urban layout of the neighborhood visited in Al Batinah North, where the mosque is at the start of the junction, followed by the houses of all the tribe members. The houses highlighted and numbered are the ones that were visited.

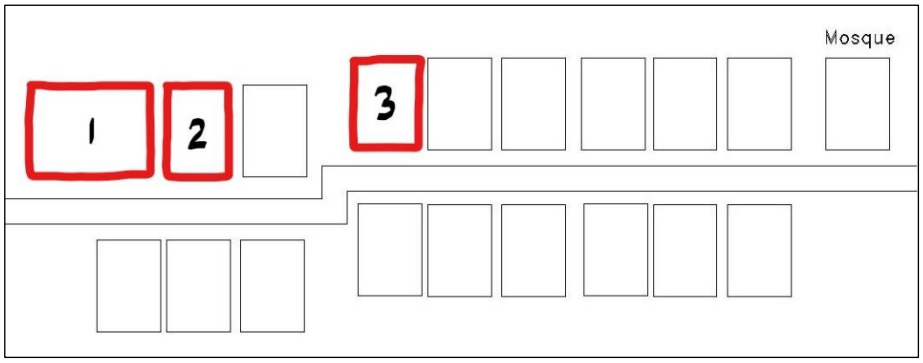

Figure 23: Layout of the neighborhood visited in Al Batinah North

Table 1: Categorization of the common characteristics observed in Omani houses

	Majlis				Built Area (m^2)			Floors			Families			Age of House (yrs)			Ornamentation		
	Attached	Separate	1	2	<400	400-800	>800	1	2	3	1	2	>2	0-15	16-30	>30	Min.	Avg.	Max.
Muscat																			
Sheikh	✓			✓		✓			✓		✓					✓	✓		
Non-Sheikh 1	✓		✓		✓				✓		✓			✓				✓	
Non-Sheikh 2	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓				✓	✓					✓
Ad Dakhiliyah																			
Sheikh		✓	✓			✓		✓					✓			✓	✓		
Non-Sheikh 1	✓		✓		✓			✓			✓					✓	✓		
Non-Sheikh 2	✓		✓		✓			✓			✓					✓	✓		
Non-Sheikh 3	✓		✓		✓				✓		✓			✓				✓	
Al Batinah (North)																			
Sheikh	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓					✓			✓	✓		
Non-Sheikh 1	✓			✓	✓				✓		✓			✓					✓
Non-Sheikh 2	✓		✓		✓				✓		✓			✓				✓	
Dhofar																			
Sheikh	✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓
Non-Sheikh 1	✓		✓		✓			✓			✓				✓		✓		
Non-Sheikh 2	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓		✓				✓				✓
Non-Sheikh 3	✓			✓		✓			✓		✓			✓					✓
Ash Sharqiyah (South)																			
Sheikh		✓		✓	✓			✓			✓			✓			✓		
Non-Sheikh 1	✓		✓		✓			✓			✓			✓			✓		
Non-Sheikh 2	✓		✓		✓			✓			✓			✓			✓		
Non-Sheikh 3	✓		✓		✓			✓			✓					✓	✓		

The sheikh's house in Dhofar was situated in an area that was once occupied exclusively by that tribe, but has since seen the scattering of its members around the city and the presence of households belonging to other tribes. This phenomenon was previously mentioned in chapter 2 (pg. 37) and was witnessed first-hand during the site visits. An abstract example can be seen in Figure 24 below, which portrays the urban state of the country a few decades ago versus the current composition.

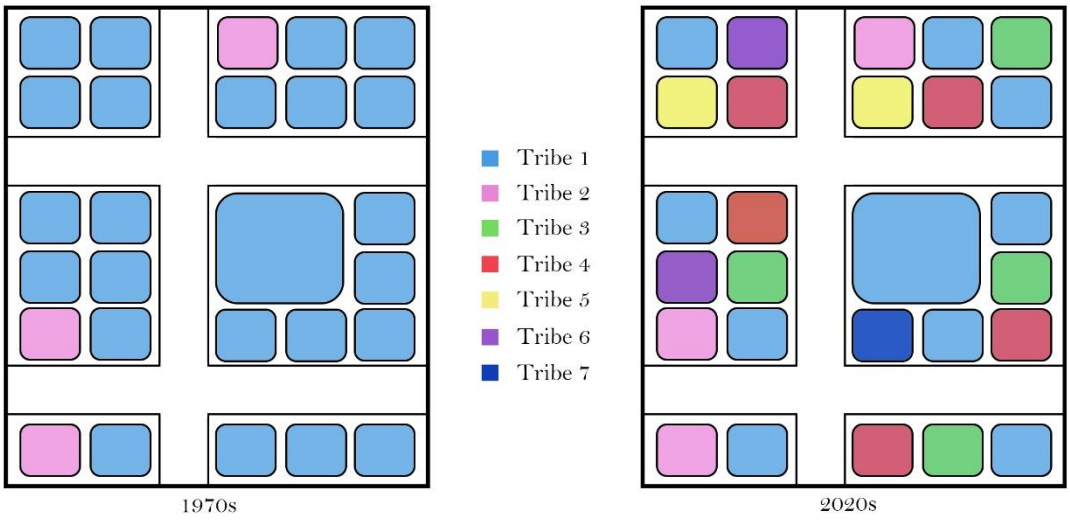

Figure 24: Tribal Composition of the Omani urban landscape in the 1970s and now

In the above figure, the illustration on the left shows what an average *harah* or neighborhood looked like fifty years ago. Each square represents the land area occupied by a household and the color of the square corresponds to the family's tribal roots. The larger square represents the Sheikh's land, which was generally much larger than those of other tribe members. Most houses in the area belonged to a single tribe, with very few exceptions. On the right is a representation of the current urban landscape, and the difference can be immediately perceived. While the Sheikh's house and a few others remained as they were, the tribal composition of the rest of the

neighborhood has changed drastically. Instead of the region being occupied by a single tribe, it has now become a heterogenous mixture of various other tribes.

An interesting feature to note was the presence of two *majales* in the sheikhly households or one separate exterior *majlis*, whereas non-sheikhly households almost always had only one *majlis* that was a room within the house. This was the norm concluded from the cases studied, but there were some exceptions. The plans of the five sheikhly houses with the *majales* highlighted can be seen in Figure 25 below.

Figure 25: Plans of sheikhly houses showing their *majales*

Although most houses were built and owned by their occupants, the sheikhly houses were almost always expanded on and stayed in the family. Conversely, some non-sheikhly houses were bought by the occupants from other people, or the newer generations move out to their own houses. On a related note, the sheikhly houses were mostly very old buildings when compared to the other houses in the study, having been constructed over thirty years ago and passed down in the family. They were also much larger than the non-sheikhly houses and had more than two nuclear families occupying them, sometimes in separate wings. Muscat and Ash Sharqiyah (South) were the two exceptions to the previous point. The sheikh's house in both regions was around the same size as the non-sheikhly houses and the sheikhly household consisted of a single nuclear family, unlike the other sheikhly houses.

Another general element shared by most of the sheikhly houses was the modest and simplistic approach to designing the house, in comparison to some of the non-sheikhly houses. This falls in line with the general attitude of sheikhs towards their people, not considering themselves 'higher' than others but that they were simply instated with a responsibility towards them. This point was also repeated on various occasions by some of the participants, claiming that no discernible difference of status could be ascertained between tribal members and sheikhs, and cementing the self-effacement of the humble Omani people.

4.1 Muscat

All of the houses visited were two floors high, including the sheikh's house. This seemed to be the standard, and the sheikh's house did not outwardly appear to be any larger or 'grander' than the non-sheikhly houses. Both built within the last twelve years, the non-sheikhly houses were relatively young constructions, whereas the

sheikh's house was over thirty years old. The sheikh's house lacked the amount of ornamentation observable in the non-sheikhly houses, but that could be attributed to its time of construction or simply the aesthetic taste of the owners. An element that seemed to be unique to Muscat was the presence of an external kitchen that was separate from the main house, and it was found in all the three houses. There were several other similarities and differences between the houses that made it difficult to ascertain any defining features of a sheikhly house, but this could possibly be attributed to the wealthiness of the second non-sheikhly household.

4.2 Ad Dakhiliyah

In this region, it was easier to differentiate between the sheikh's household and the non-sheikhly houses. For instance, the sheikh's house and plot area were much larger than the non-sheikhly houses. Though all the houses had only one *majlis*, it was a separate, dedicated building in the sheikh's case. Only one nuclear family occupied each of the non-sheikhly houses, whereas multiple nuclear families lived within the sheikh's compound. A few similarities could be found between all the houses, with a few discrepancies in the case of the third non-sheikhly house. For example, the third non-sheikhly house was the only two-floor house among the studied cases. This was most probably due to it being an extremely young construction, while the other cases were all over thirty years old. The time of construction clearly affects other factors, such as building style, materials used and ornamentation, which are some of the few discrepancies previously mentioned.

4.3 Al Batinah (North)

The non-sheikhly houses in Al Batinah were all built within the last fifteen years and in a contemporary style - two floors high and a single nuclear family living in each. The sheikh's house, however, was over thirty years old and stood out from the rest

despite being in the same neighborhood as the other houses. It was the only single-floor construction in the area and had the largest built area out of all the cases. The sheikh's house was also the least eye-catching out of the other houses, with minimal attention paid to the exterior and interior ornamentation of the house. Though not the only house with two *majales*, it was also the only case with a *majlis* separate from the living quarters.

4.4 Dhofar

In general, the houses in Dhofar were larger, older, and exhibited greater attention to detail than the houses in other regions. With that being the average, the sheikh's house was still much larger than the non-sheikhly houses, as well as being much older. It was the only three-floor construction among all the visited houses and the only case in Dhofar that housed multiple nuclear families. A peculiar point in this region was the fact that most houses had two *majales*, with the only exception being the second non-sheikhly house. That could be attributed to its special circumstance as being an apartment or part rather than a whole building.

4.5 Ash Sharqiyah (South)

The houses in this region were the most homogenous out of all the regions in the Sultanate. The only noticeable differences were that the sheikh's house had two separate *majales* and the third non-sheikhly house was extremely old. Other than that, it was actually difficult to point out the sheikh's house from all the rest.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

With a few exceptions, there were several common features among the various sheikhly houses across the country, which asserts the fact that ‘sheikhly features’ is a valid and existent concept. Though some of these features may not be easily ascertained by looking at a house’s exterior, they become evident from the house’s layout and internal elements. These features are the double *majlis*, larger built area, multiple nuclear families occupying the house, longer building life, and minimal ornamentation.

However, current trends seem to move towards lesser demarcation between sheikhly and non-sheikhly houses. The sheikhly features conferred above are not concrete rules and as witnessed in the case studies, certain exceptions or deviations from the norm may (and do) occur. If the owner is financially capable, he may include any and as many elements as he wishes to his residence. In that regard, nothing in particular is exclusive to the social status of a person as a tribal leader. Consequently, current results indicate that tribal hierarchy does not affect how individuals choose to construct their houses.

Another point to take into consideration is the continuous development of suburbs and the building of new villas. Fewer people are choosing to live with their families and inherit the family house, thus straying away from the tradition of having multiple

nuclear families living under a single roof. Unless maintained and occupied by family members, older sheikhly houses get rented out to expatriates or sold to other Omanis, or in the worst-case scenario end up being simply abandoned.

Tribalism in the Arab world has been slowly dying generation after generation. However, since family is a core concept in the Islamic and Arab world, the relationship between an individual and their tribe (surname) would never disappear entirely. The title ‘Sheikh’ is also getting less associated with tribal leaders and more with the financial worth of an individual. A few years from now, as the social construct of the Sheikh further diminishes, it may therefore become completely impossible to distinguish between the houses of citizens based solely on their tribal position.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participation Consent Form

Department of Architecture
Eastern Mediterranean University

The Sheikhs of Oman: A Study on the Correlation between Tribal Hierarchy and Residences

Dear participant,

Please take a few minutes to read the following information on this research carefully before you agree to participate. If at any time you have a question regarding the study, please feel free to ask the researcher who will provide more information.

This study is being conducted by Demah Alsafy under the supervision of Dr. Özgür Dinçyürek. It aims to investigate the differences between the houses of people at the tribal as well as regional level, and how these variances relate to the existing tribal hierarchy in the country.

You are not obliged to participate in this research and are free to refuse to participate. You may also withdraw from the study at any point without giving any reason. In this case, all of your responses will be destroyed and omitted from the research. If you agree to participate in and complete the study, your name and identifying information will not be disclosed except for the purposes of data analysis and scientific research. Once the data is analyzed, a report of the findings may be submitted for publication.

To signify your voluntary participation, please complete the consent form below.

CONSENT FORM

Research Title: The Sheikhs of Oman: A Study on the Correlation between Tribal Hierarchy and Residences

Name of Researcher: Demah Taif Alsafy

demah.prodigy@gmail.com

P.O.Box 150, Salalah 211, Sultanate of Oman

- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I understand that participation involves allowing the researcher access to my house to be able to observe and analyze it accurately. The researcher may make her own sketches or take pictures, as well as ask me questions related to the house and its construction.

- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.

- I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will not be declared.

- I understand that extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and published papers.

- I understand that I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time.

- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant **Date**

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher **Date**

Appendix B: Sample Interview Questions

Department of Architecture
Eastern Mediterranean University

The Sheikhs of Oman: A Study on the Correlation between Tribal Hierarchy and Residences

Sample Interview Questions

1. Please state your name and occupation.

2. How long have you lived in this house?

3. Was it constructed by you or someone else?

4. When was it constructed?

5. How many (nuclear) families live in this house?

Appendix C: Building Regulations for Muscat

Muscat Municipality
Local Order No. 23/92
Building Regulation For Muscat

Issued on 9th Shawal 1412 H
12th April 1992

Building Regulation For Muscat
The Sultanate Of Oman

INDEX

LOCAL ORDER NO (23/92)
BUILDING REGULATIONS FOR MUSCAT

MUSCAT MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

After perusal of Royal Decree No. 18/84 on the transfer of supervision over Muscat Municipality to the Diwan of Royal Court and Royal Decree NO: 8/92 on the issuance of the Law on the organization of Muscat Municipality and amendments thereof.

And Local Order No (1) on Building Regulations issued on 21-1-1974. And Ministerial Decision No. 40/81 on Building Regulations issued on 24/10/1991.

And according to Royal Orders from His Majesty, The Sultan that building specifications and architectural design should be a combination of Omani, Arab, Islamic and contemporary style & character.

The Municipal Council hereby, issues the following Local Order:

CHAPTER – I
General Provisions

Article 1

DEFINATIONS

Unless stated otherwise the words and phrases used hereafter will have the following meanings:

Minister: The Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court.

Council: The Council of Muscat Municipality.

Municipality: Muscat Municipality.

Council Chairman: The Chairman of Municipality Council.

President: President of Muscat Municipality.

Committee: Public Affairs Committee at the Council.

Owner: The person (persons) or company or an authority who has a little deed or a property identification certificate issued in his/her/their name.

Building: A structure incorporating a group of elements meant to serve a common or different purposes and functions. It includes the walls and all civil works and may consist of one floor only or a number of floors.

Permanent Building : Any Building or structure made of bricks, block works reinforced concrete or stones etc or a metal framework or any other solid permanent material.

Temporary Building : Any building or structure made of materials other than those stated in the definition of the permanent building. Also any building or structure erected by a special permission for a limited period of time, are included in this definition.

Road (Street) : A street shown on the structure plan of the city for the use of cars and pedestrians. It may be of width large enough for division into two way Lanes with a pavement or median in between.

Sikka : A passage or a branch road of narrower width for the use of pedestrians and a limited number of cars.

examining the official documents of the building and the land on which it is constructed. The maintenance should not introduce any alterations in the type of the building or the materials used for construction.

Article 2 : Approval shall be obtained from the Municipality before a building is constructed, additions to it are made, demolished totally or in part or have external or internal alterations, changed in style, leveled or have a door or window opened. Colours of paintings approved by the Municipality shall be adhered to when the building is painted or re-painted.

Article 3 : Before starting any construction work, organic and botanical materials, if any, shall be removed from the construction site and replaced if necessary by materials approved by the building authorities. The site shall also be treated with insecticides for protection against termites and other insects.

Article 4 : The major building permit shall not be issued unless official documents and plans of the proposed building are attached to the application (see article 5). The minor building permit and the maintenance permit may be issued without drawings if other conditions are fulfilled.

Article 5 : Applications, for the Major building permits shall be submitted to the Municipality "Building Permits Department" in accordance with the procedures in force. The relevant forms shall be filled by the Owner and/or his Consultant. The following documents and plans shall be attached to the application.

A. Copy of the Property Identification Certificate or Ownership Certificate. (The Municipality has the right to ask for the original, if necessary).

B. Site plan (Krooki), or an approved true copy of it issued by the concerned Authority.

C. Any forms, models or conditions that may be made in the interest of work by the Municipality or any concerned Authority.

Article 33 : Architectural Projection and Building Facades/Elevations

1. Architectural projection, 5% of the width of the street, is permitted on the neighbouring street side provided that the projection does not exceed 50 cm. whatever me wiam of the street.

2. The architectural design of facades/elevations of residential and residential-commercial buildings shall be according to the local, Arabs or Islamic style as in the models prepared by the concerned Department or the conceptual design submitted by the Consultant and approved by the concerned Department.

3. Totally inclined roofs are not permitted as well as the use of potter tiles of all colours. However in facades such as entrances of buildings and sheds over windows deviations from these conditions may be accepted.

4. In Industrial areas of various types, wood or metal sheds be covered. Concrete materials, metals or wood may be used as cover depending on the areas where the plot is located.

5. Projecting or visible air-conditioners on facades/elevations of buildings shall be covered with a screen as per Article 32 item I. Air-conditioners, in all floors, shall have plastic pipes coming down the building to the ground to drain excess water. These pipes shall be inside the wall or fixed to it from outside in such a way that does not distort the facade/elevation of the building.

Appendix D: Royal Decree 26/75

Royal Decree
No. 26/75

Regarding the Issuance of the Law Regulating the Administrative Apparatus of the State

We, Qaboos bin Said, Sultan of Oman

Having perused of the Royal Decree No. 3 / 75 to form a special committee to look into the regulation of the State's Administrative Apparatus and

Pursuant to the public interest exigencies,

And based on what presented to us by the Assistant Chief of the Development Council ,

Decreed as follows: -

Article one: The following text of the Law Regulating the Administrative Apparatus of the State for the year 1975 shall come into force from the first day of July 1975.

Article Two: This decree shall cancel the provisions of any decree or law or regulation incompatible with any of the terms and provisions contained in this law.

Article Three: All Ministers, each within his own jurisdiction shall implement this law and shall be published in the Official Gazette.

Issued on: 18 Jamada Althani 1395 Ah
Corresponding to : 19 June 1975

Qaboos bin Said
Sultan of Oman

The Jurisdiction of the Ministry of Land Affairs: -

1 - Planning lands in all regions of the Sultanate for the purposes of housing at various levels and for the commercial and industrial purposes and dividing planned zones to a plots with specific area , number , reference, and grade .

2 – Preparing development maps and site maps for each planned region determining on it the location of streets and public facilities places such as markets, mosques, schools , hospitals and others.

3 - Coordinating planning projects with related government ministries and departments before ratification and implementation.

4 - Distributing lands to citizens, whether residential lands or in the industrial or commercial area in accordance with the law regulating the lands.

5 - Working on the distribution of lands to citizens as quickly as required and in a way that achieve justice for all.

6 – Determining and measuring lands after making sure that the planned lands are not owned by the government, or AWaqaf (endowment) , after surveying the land on nature and at the presence of the concerned citizens and then submitting the final maps to citizens to complete the proceedings.

7 - Defining lands approved to be awarded to citizens in different Wilayat so they can construct buildings pursuant to the certified borders on maps.

8 - Defining Agricultural lands in different Wilayats .

9 - keeping a record for registering title deeds for all types of lands granted to citizens with the opening of a special file for each allocated plot showing all types of disposition such as sale or mortgage or otherwise, to ensure the conservation of the citizen property rights .

10 - Considering the Lands conflicts between people and render a judgment after hearing testimony of the concerned parties and after examining the documents and its application on nature to make sure that the instrument provided is applicable to nature.

11 - Considering technical complaints related to planning, as well as buildings that affect the neighbor.

12 – Making decision in all rent cases related to increasing rents or requests for evacuation.

12 –Rehabilitating and training Omani employees working in the ministry.

Appendix E: Architectural Inventories (Case 1-3)

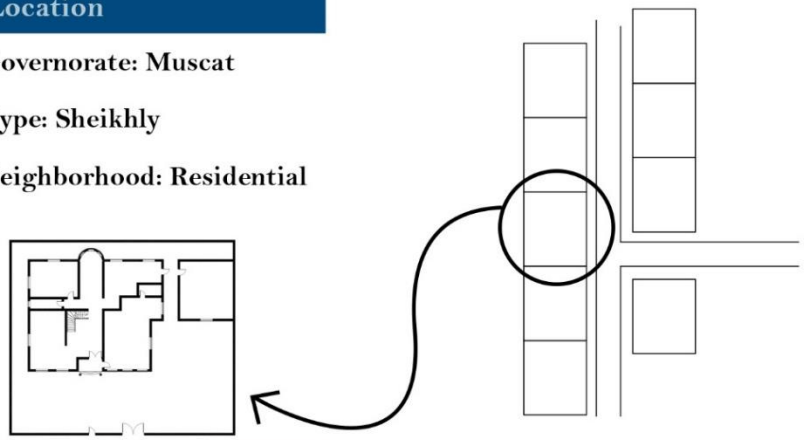
Case 1

Location

Governorate: Muscat

Type: Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential



Photographs

Male Majlis

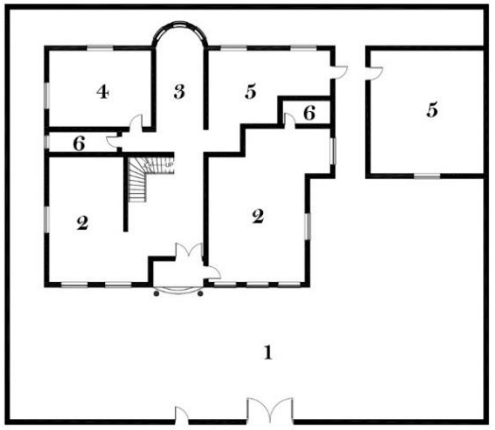
Main Entrance

Floor Plan

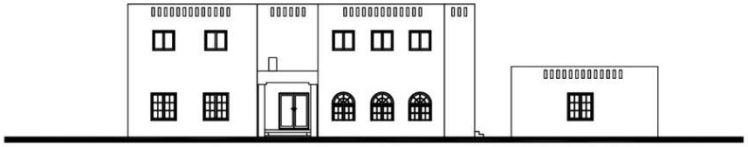
House Size: 380m²

Plot Size: 800m²

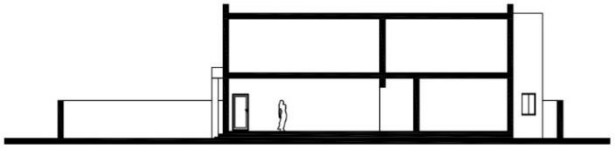
1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom



Elevation/Section



Main Elevation



Section

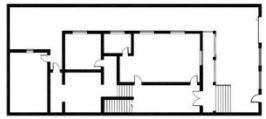
Case 2

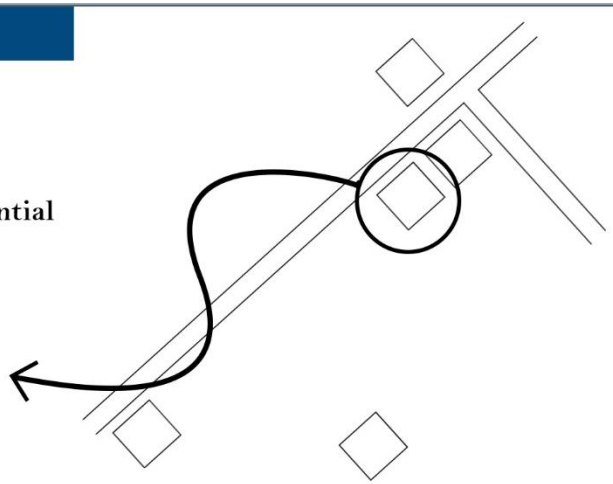
Location

Governorate: Muscat

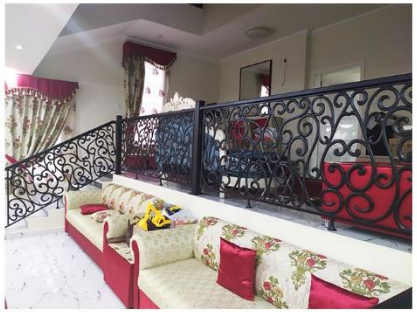
Type: Non-Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential





Photographs



Living Room

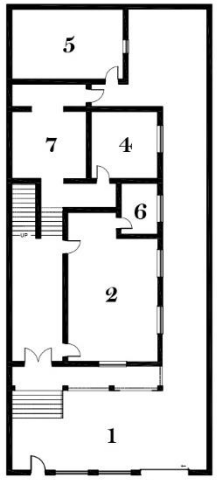
Entrance

Floor Plan

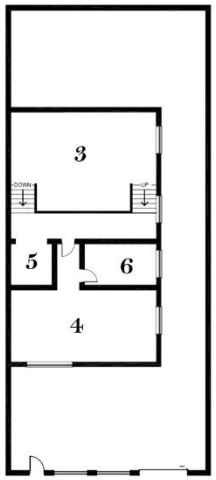
House Size: 240m²

Plot Size: 300m²

1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom
7 - Dining Room

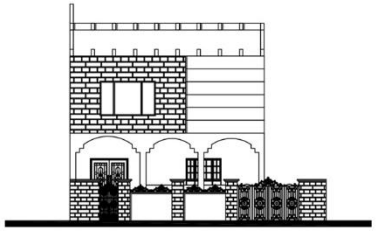


Ground Floor

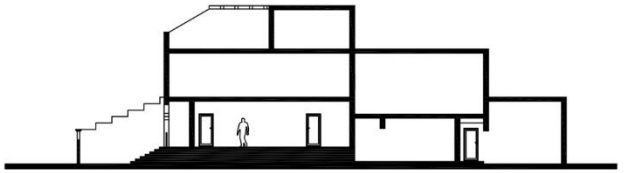


First Floor

Elevation/Section



Elevation



Section

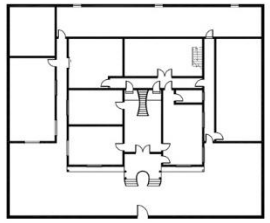
Case 3

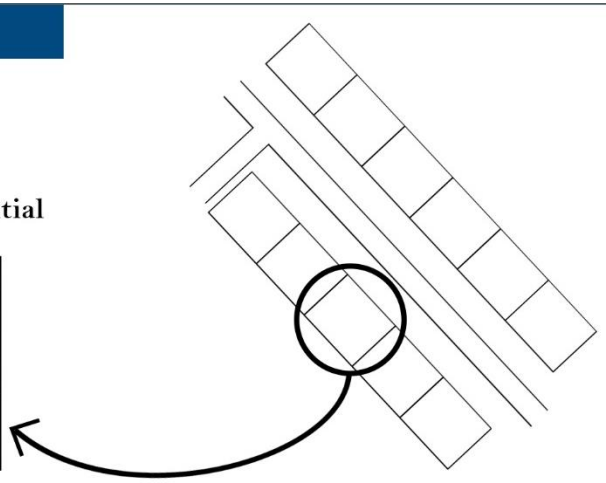
Location

Governorate: Muscat

Type: Non-Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential





Photographs

Majlis

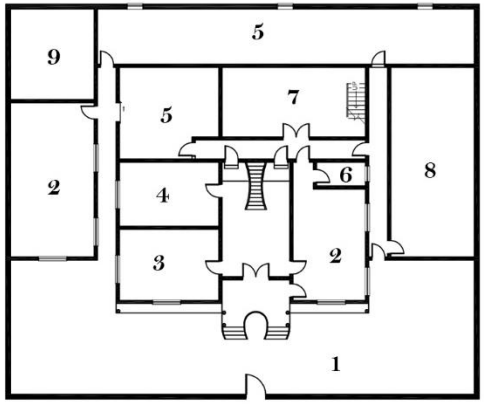
Entrance

Floor Plan

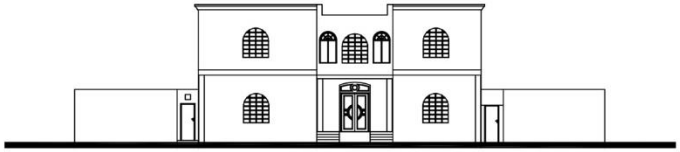
House Size: 500m²

Plot Size: 800m²

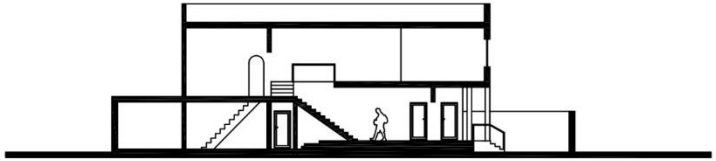
1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom
7 - Dining Hall
8 - Servant's Quarters
9 - Store



Elevation/Section



Main Elevation



Section

Appendix F: Architectural Inventories (Case 4-7)

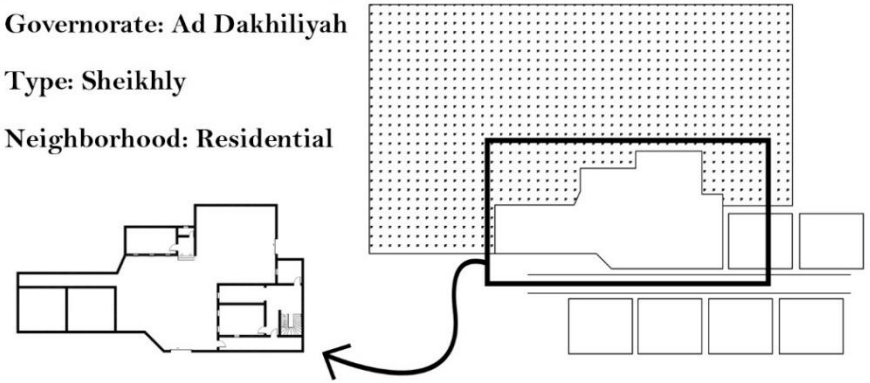
Case 4

Location

Governorate: Ad Dakhiliyah

Type: Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential



Photographs

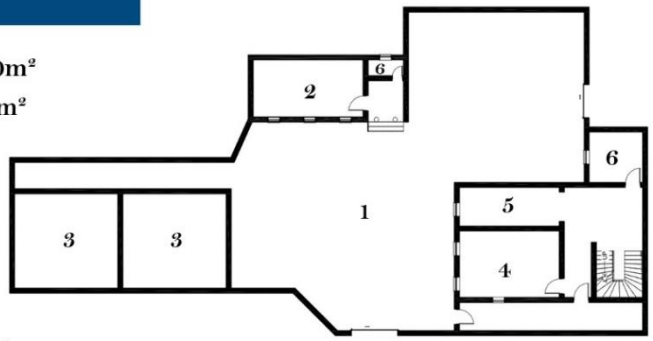
Majlis

House

Floor Plan

House Size: 150m²

Plot Size: 3000m²



1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Family Houses
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom

Elevation/Section

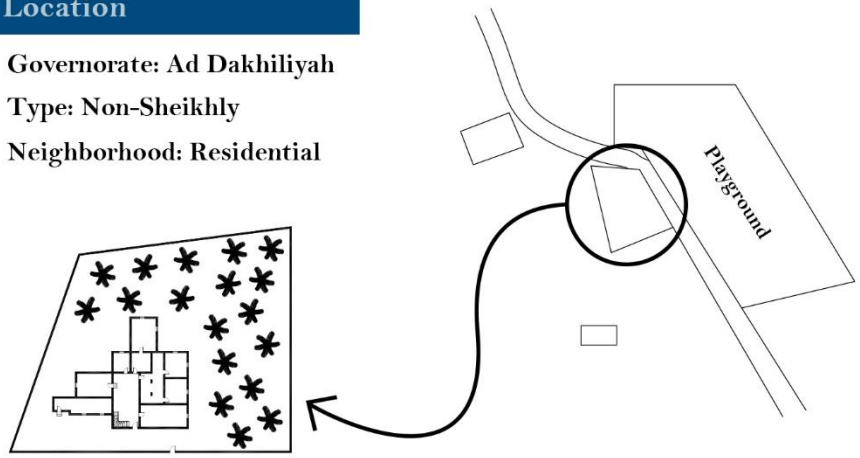
Case 5

Location

Governorate: Ad Dakhiliyah

Type: Non-Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential



Photographs

Entrance Gate

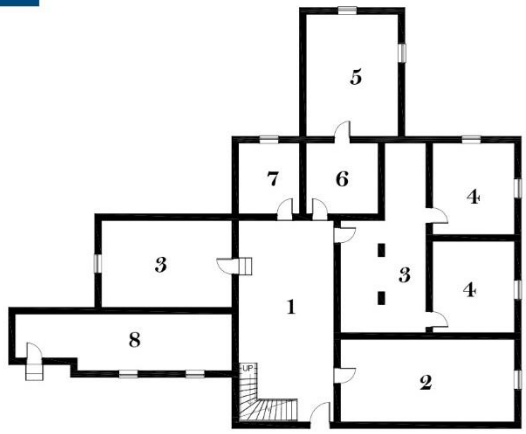
View within Courtyard

Floor Plan

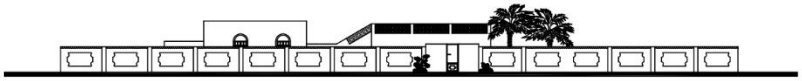
House Size: 300m²

Plot Size: 1500m²

1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Store
7 - Bathroom
8 - Laundry

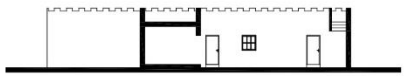


Elevation/Section



Main Elevation

Section A-A



Section B-B

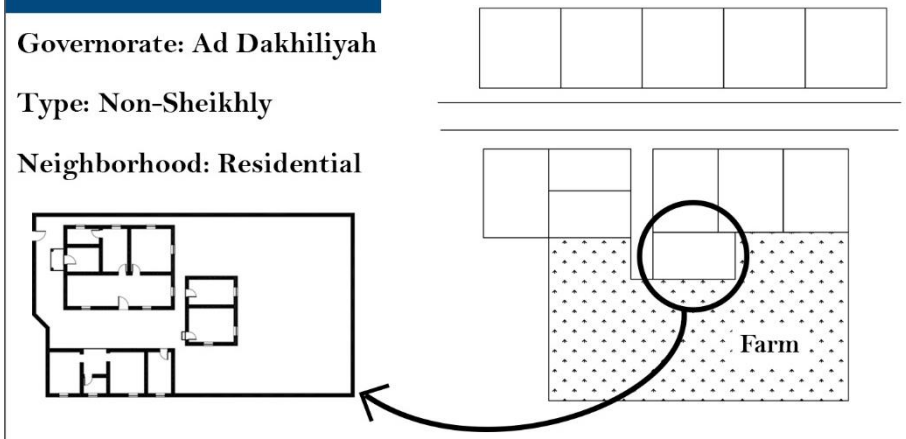
Case 6

Location

Governorate: Ad Dakhiliyah

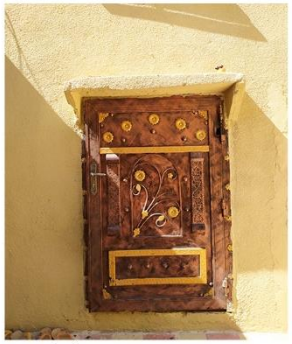
Type: Non-Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential



Photographs

View within courtyard



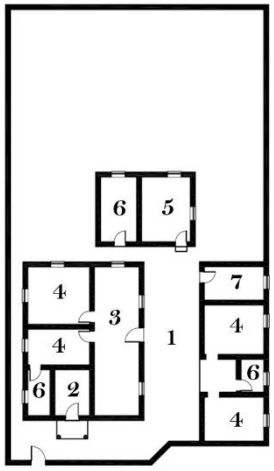
Living Room Door

Floor Plan

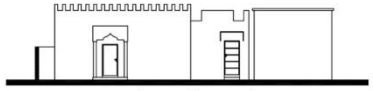
House Size: 300m²

Plot Size: 1000m²

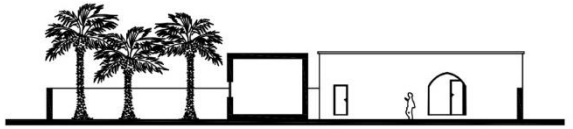
1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom
7 - Store



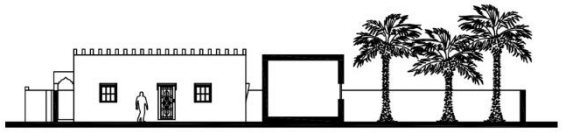
Elevation/Section



Main Elevation



Section A-A



Section B-B

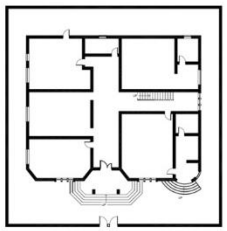
Case 7

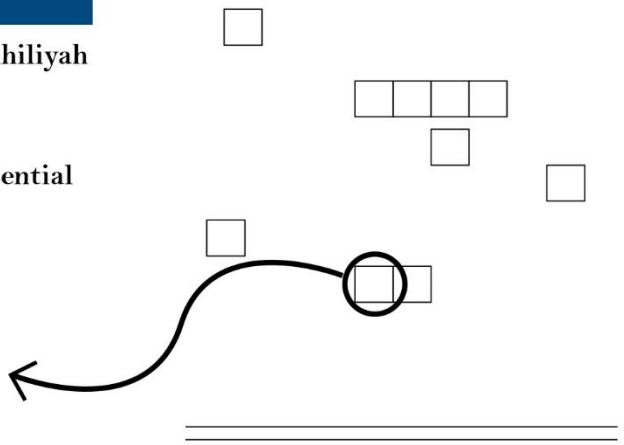
Location

Governorate: Ad Dakhiliyah

Type: Non-Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential





Photographs

Rear Elevation

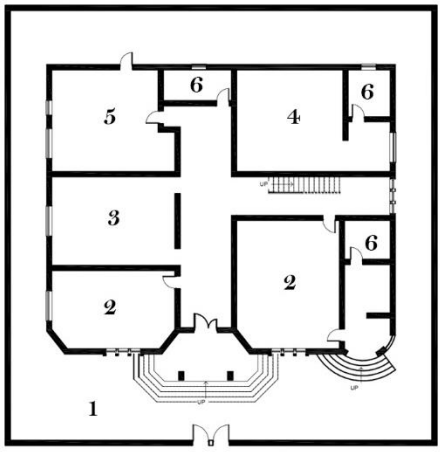
Front Entrance

Floor Plan

House Size: 300m²

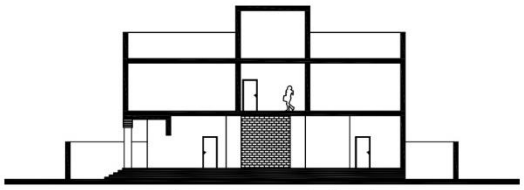
Plot Size: 600m²

1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom



Elevation/Section

Main Elevation



Section through hallway

Appendix G: Architectural Inventories (Case 8-10)

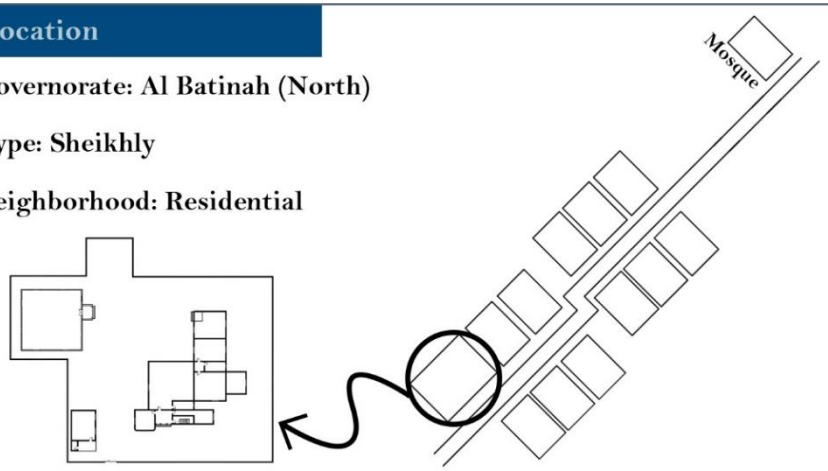
Case 8

Location

Governorate: Al Batinah (North)

Type: Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential



Photographs

Main Entrance

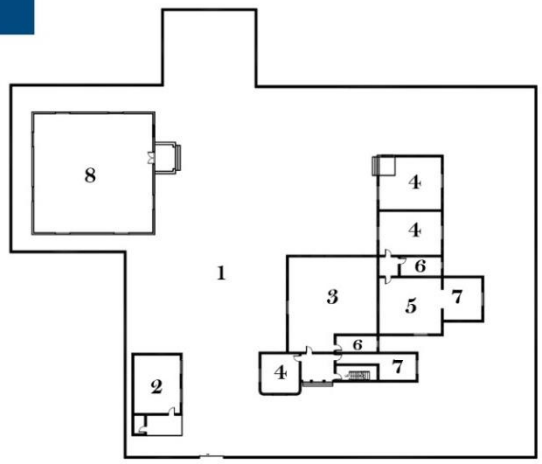
Majlis

Floor Plan

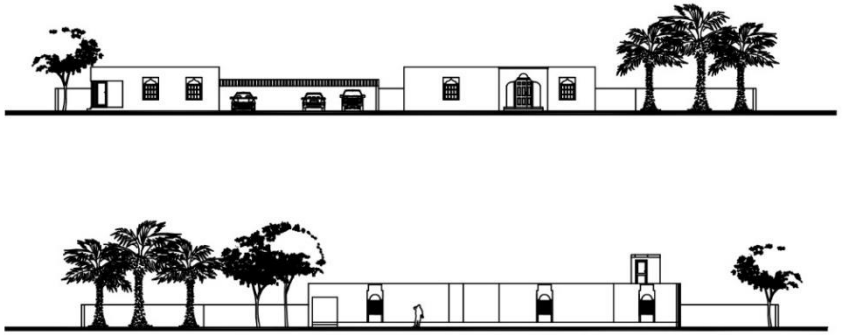
House Size: 650m²

Plot Size: 3000m²

1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom
7 - Store
8 - Attachment



Elevation/Section



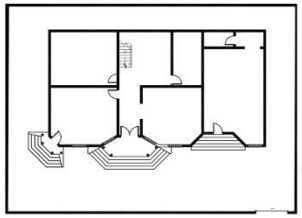
Case 9

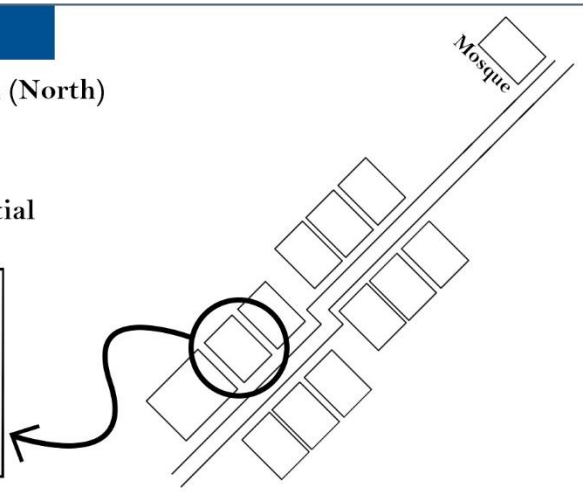
Location

Governorate: Al Batinah (North)

Type: Non-Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential





Photographs

Exterior

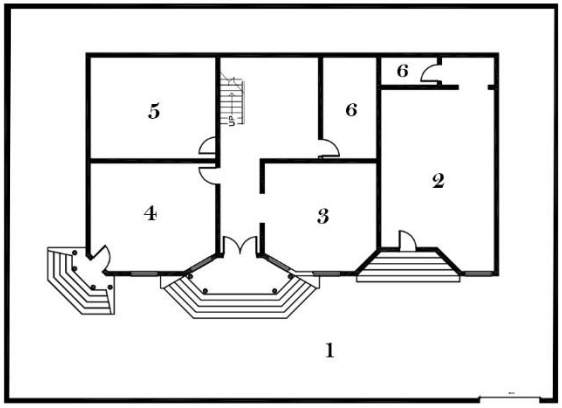
Main Entrance

Floor Plan

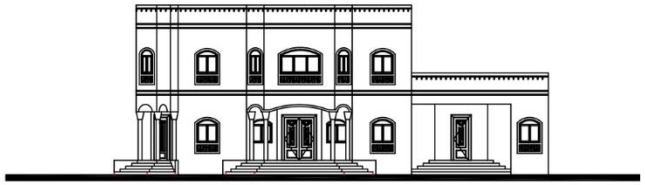
House Size: 300m²

Plot Size: 600m²

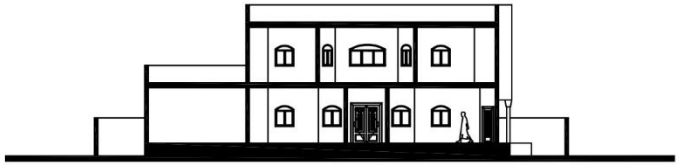
1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom



Elevation/Section



Main Elevation



Section

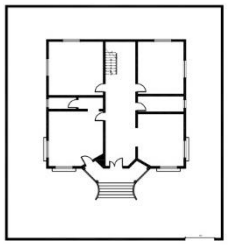
Case 10

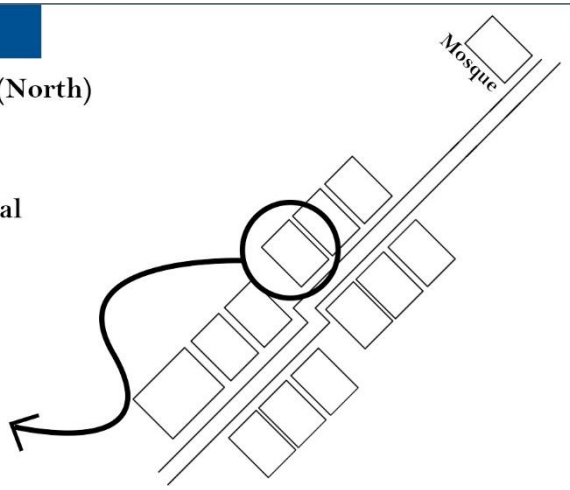
Location

Governorate: Al Batinah (North)

Type: Non-Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential





Photographs

Main Entrance

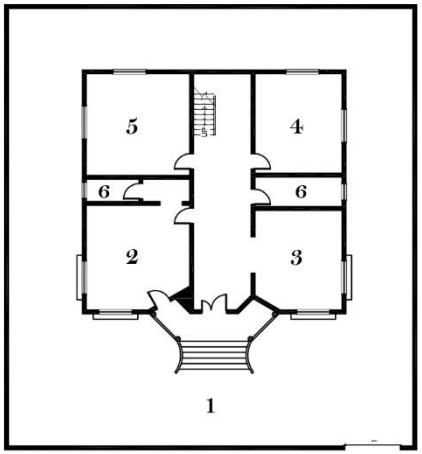
Exterior

Floor Plan

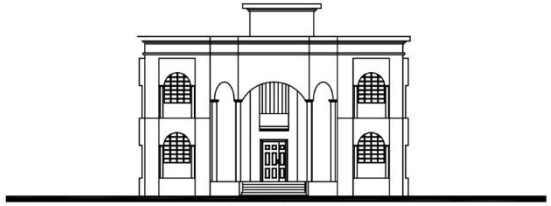
House Size: 300m²

Plot Size: 600m²

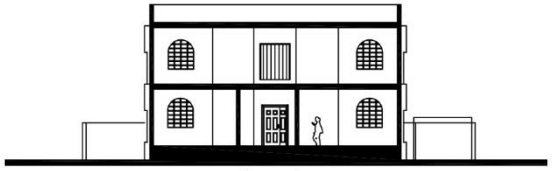
1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom



Elevation/Section



Main Elevation



Section

Appendix H: Architectural Inventories (Case 11-14)

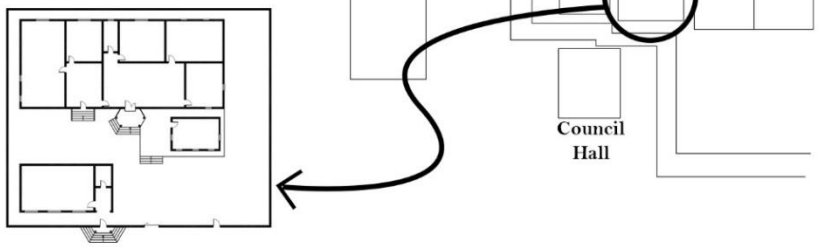
Case 11

Location

Governorate: Ash Sharqiyah (South)

Type: Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential



Photographs

Exterior

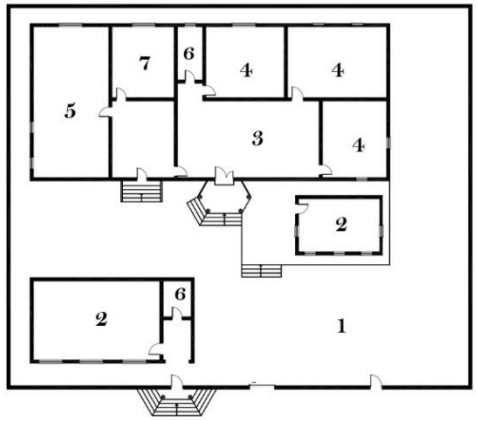
Main Entrance

Floor Plan

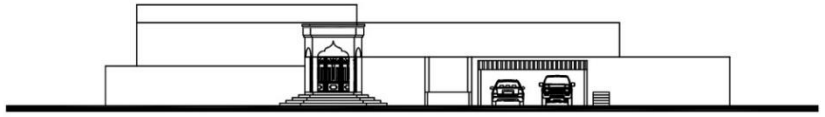
House Size: 250m²

Plot Size: 800m²

1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom
7 - Servant's Quarters



Elevation/Section



Main Elevation

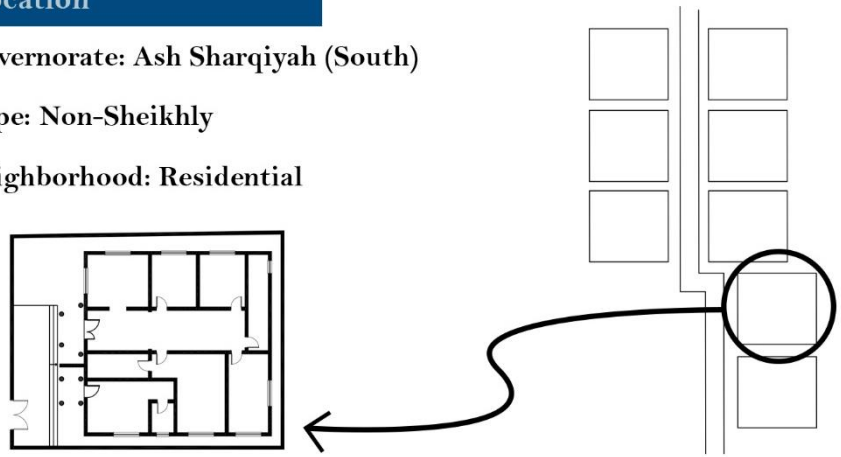
Case 12

Location

Governorate: Ash Sharqiyah (South)

Type: Non-Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential



Photographs

Exterior

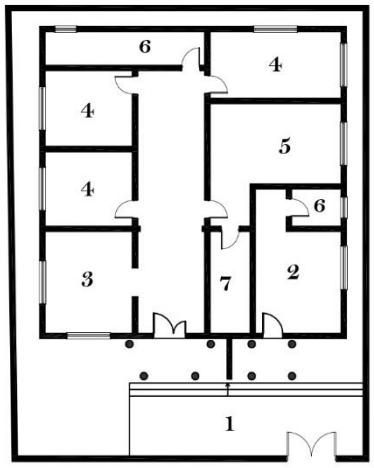
Main Entrance

Floor Plan

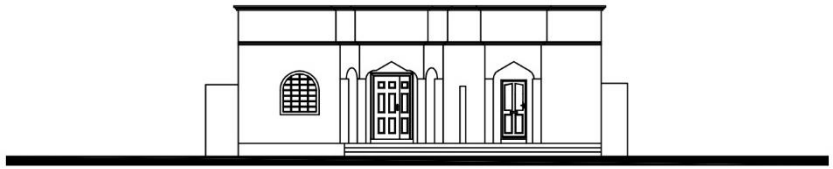
House Size: 200m²

Plot Size: 400m²

1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom
7 - Store



Elevation/Section



Main Elevation

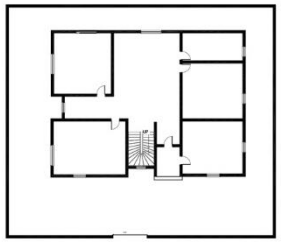
Case 13

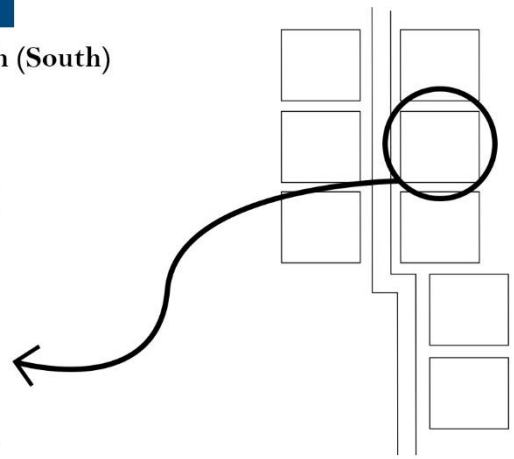
Location

Governorate: Ash Sharqiyah (South)

Type: Non-Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential





Photographs

Exterior

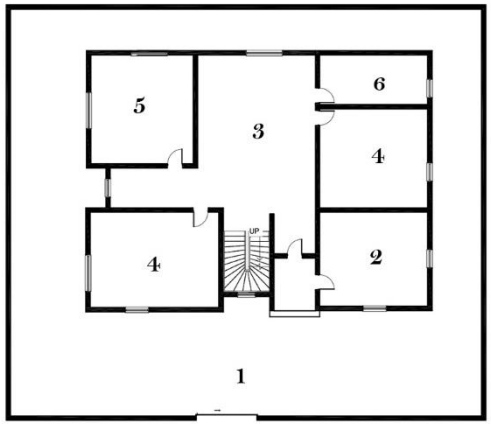
Main Entrance

Floor Plan

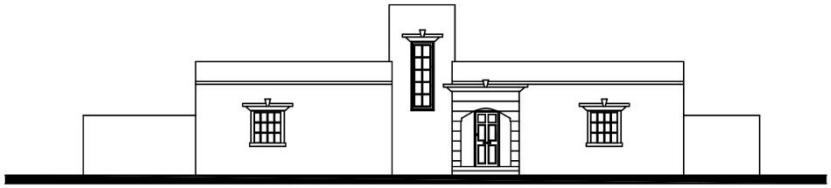
House Size: 150m²

Plot Size: 400m²

1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom



Elevation/Section



Main Elevation

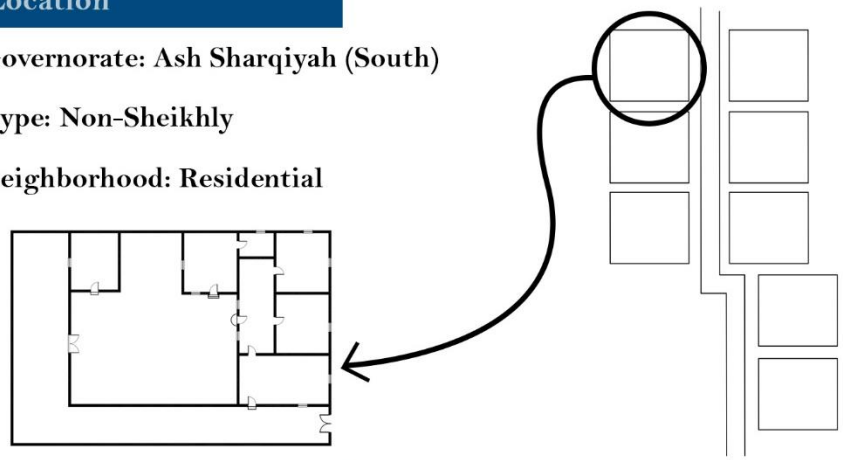
Case 14

Location

Governorate: Ash Sharqiyah (South)

Type: Non-Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential



Photographs

View from Courtyard

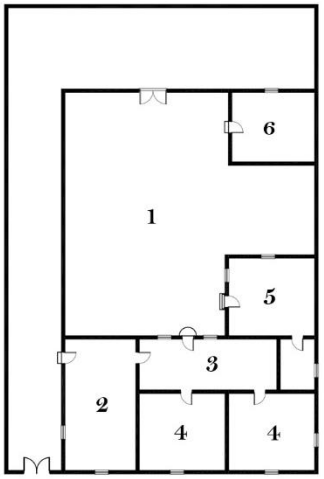
Main Entrance

Floor Plan

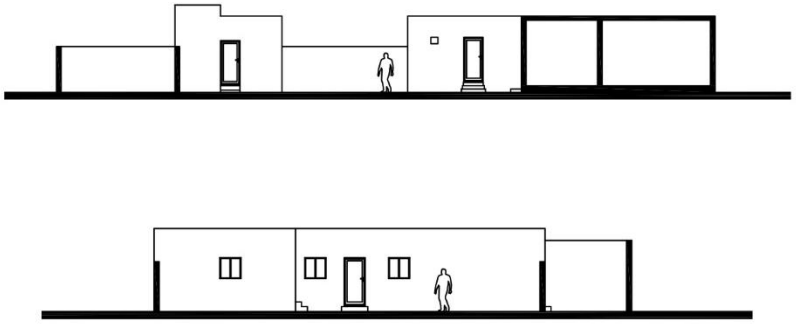
House Size: 150m²

Plot Size: 400m²

1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom



Elevation/Section



Appendix I: Architectural Inventories (Case 15-18)

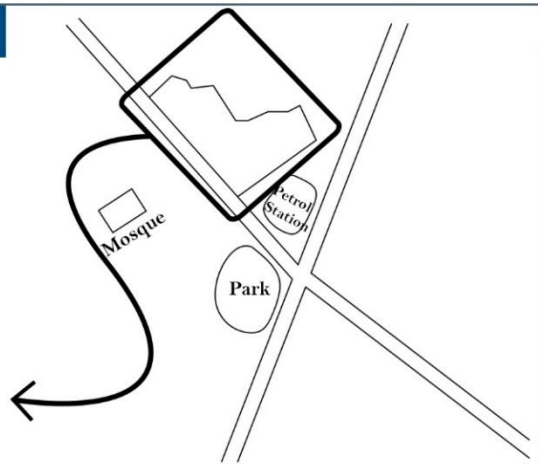
Case 15

Location

Governorate: Dhofar

Type: Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential
Commercial



Photographs

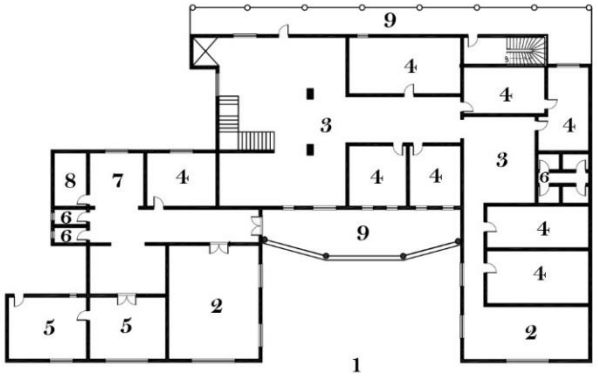
View from Courtyard

Majlis

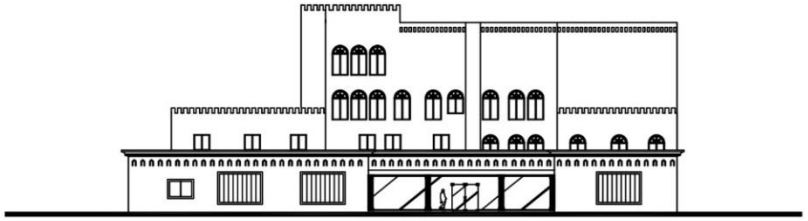
Floor Plan

House Size: 1000m²
Plot Size: 12600m²

1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom
7 - Dining Hall
8 - Store
9 - Porch



Elevation/Section



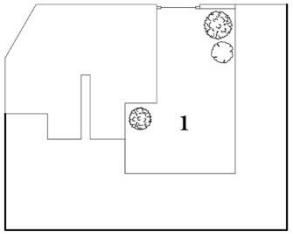
Case 16

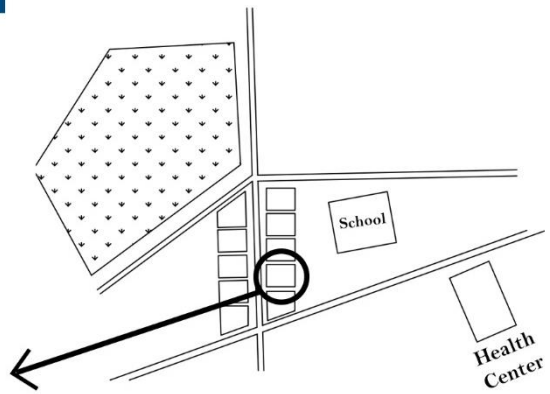
Location

Governorate: Dhofar

Type: Non-Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential





Photographs

Exterior

Majlis

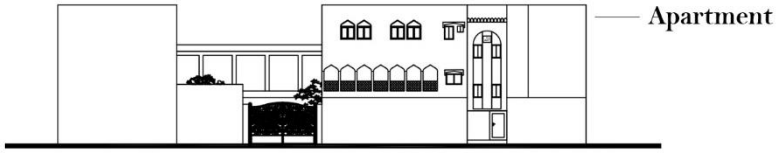
Floor Plan

House Size: 400m²

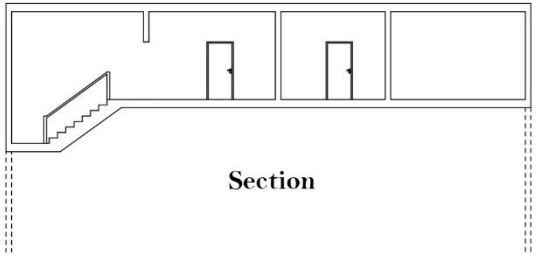
Plot Size: 2000m²

1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom
7 - Office
8 - Store

Elevation/Section



Elevation



Section

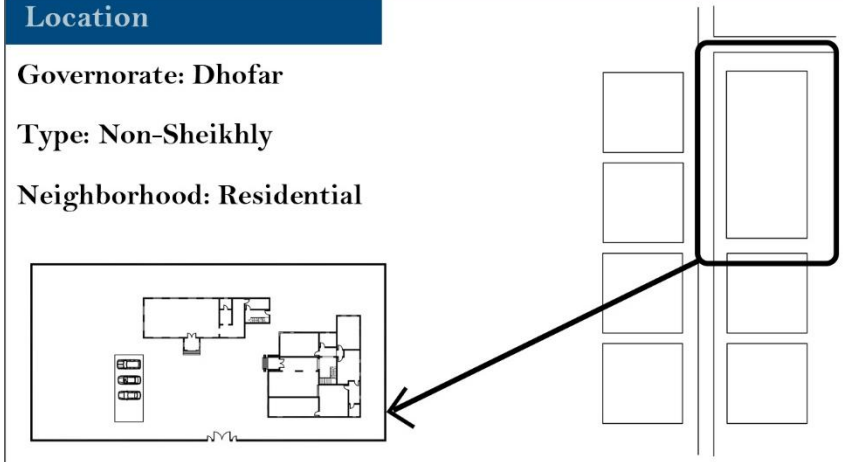
Case 17

Location

Governorate: Dhofar

Type: Non-Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential



Photographs

Exterior

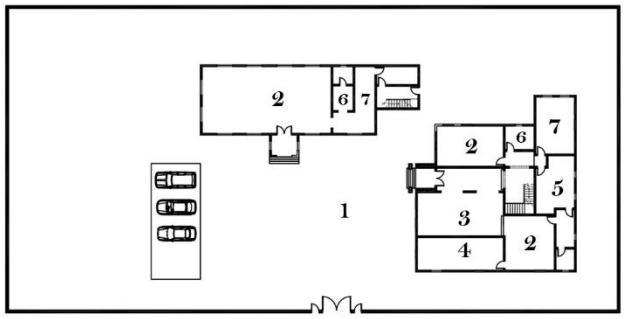
Majlis

Floor Plan

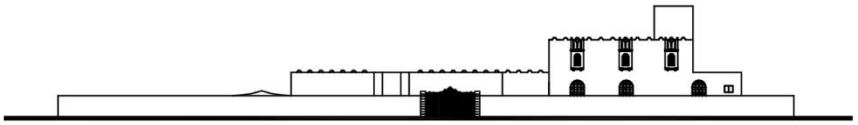
House Size: 400m²

Plot Size: 2000m²

1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom
7 - Dining Hall



Elevation/Section



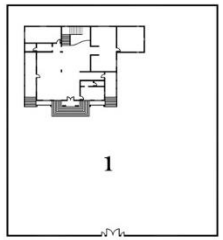
Case 18

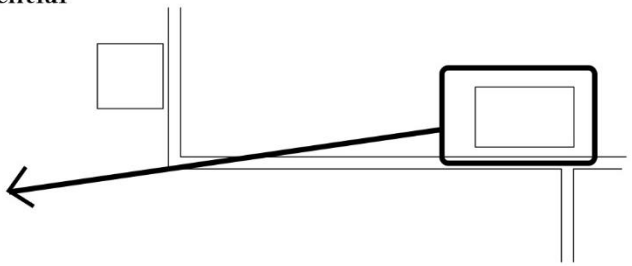
Location

Governorate: Dhofar

Type: Non-Sheikhly

Neighborhood: Residential





Photographs

Exterior

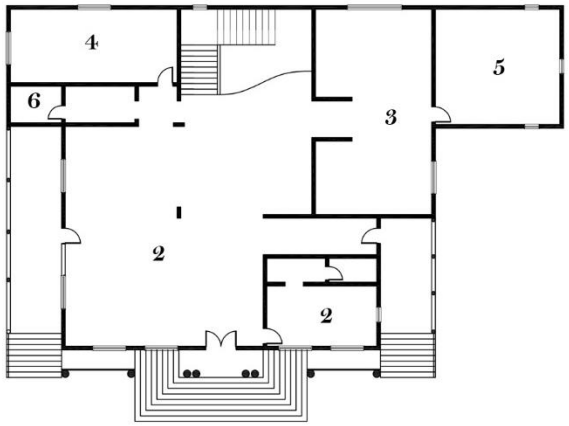
Majlis

Floor Plan

House Size: 500m²

Plot Size: 3000m²

1 - Courtyard
2 - Majlis
3 - Living Room
4 - Bedroom
5 - Kitchen
6 - Bathroom



Elevation/Section

Appendix J: Glossary of Arabic Terms

Aflaj	plural; see *Falaj*
Arish	Coconut-palm frond stems
Baranda	Roofed porch or balcony
Bedu	Desert nomads
Dahariz	Long, rectangular hallways or rooms
Falaj	Channel dug underground for retrieval of groundwater
Feddan	Unit of area used in Egypt, Sudan, Syria and Oman, equal to $4200m^2$
Hadr	Urbanized people
Harah	Neighborhood or quarter of a town
Harat	plural; see *Harah*
Imam	in Islam – one who leads the prayers, title of a religious leader
Juss	Plaster or mortar made of burnt lime
Khareef	Monsoon season characterized by rains and cooler weather
Khayma	Tent
Libin	Mud brick
Majales	plural; see *Majlis*
Majaz	Bent or curved pathway to a house, accessible from the street
Majlis	Reception area or room
Mashrabiyyah	in Islamic architecture – projecting window with wooden latticework
Sablah	Large, public reception hall or area

Saruj	Cement made of burnt lime and mud
Sheikh	Tribal leader
Tabasheer	literally ‘good tidings’; Stacked parapet design element
Wilayat	Provinces