

Women of Oman: Changing Roles & Transnational Influence

YEAR OF ARABIAN PENINSULA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Sponsored by the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center (SQCC)

Hosted by Kennesaw State University

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The 2014 Year of the Arabian Peninsula Conference, titled *Women of Oman: Changing Roles and Transnational Influence*, will address how the participation of women in public life contributes to positive social change in Oman. Oman is increasingly calling upon women to shape its future and the future of the region. While social and legal challenges remain for Omani women, as they do for women across the globe, an estimated one-third of all civil servants in Oman are women, and more Omani women than men pursue a university education. In March 2004, Oman's first woman minister was appointed to head the Ministry of Higher Education. Today, women in Oman are free to drive, work, own land, vote, and hold office. Women's empowerment enhances educational achievement and economic productivity, reduces infant mortality, and contributes to improved health and nutrition. The organizers of this conference hold that increasing the participation of women in all manner of decision making is crucial to advancing human development.

FEATURED SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Her Excellency Ambassador Hunaina Al Mughairy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United States

H.E. Ambassador Al Mughairy was appointed as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Sultanate of Oman to the United States of America on December 2, 2005. She also serves as Chair of the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center's Board of Oversight. Ambassador Al Mughairy is an economist with an extensive business background. Since taking over this position, she has been a strong advocate for the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement and has focused much of her energy on improving relations between the U.S. and Oman. As the first woman to represent an Arab country as an Ambassador in Washington, Ambassador Al Mughairy has worked to improve the image of Arab women in the United States. Prior to her work in diplomacy, she served many roles in Oman's Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Omani Center for Investment Promotion & Export Development. Ambassador Al Mughairy obtained a B.A in Business Communications from the High Polytechnical Institute in Cairo, and an M.A. in Economics from New York University, New York.



Her Excellency Dr. Rawya Saud Al Busaidi, Minister of Higher Education, Oman

H.E. Dr. Rawya Saud Al Busaidi, PhD from Oxford University, was the first woman in the Sultanate of Oman to be appointed to full ministerial rank, and has held the post of Minister of Higher Education since March 2004 when she was also appointed as Chair of the Sultan Qaboos University Council and Deputy Chair of the Council of Higher Education. Among the other key posts currently held by Her Excellency include that of Deputy Chair of Oman's new Science Research Council, and Chair of the Board of the College of Law.

She has initiated major projects for the reform and quality improvement of Education in Oman, including a Strategic Plan for Education in the Sultanate for the period 2006-2020, as well as a project to convert five of Oman's government Colleges of Education to institutions specializing in a range of programs selected to reflect the growing diversification of Oman's economy. She is also active

in the GCC region where she is leading a project to develop common standards for the professions, as well as a regional Quality Assurance network.



Her Highness Dr. Mona bint Fahad Al Said, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman

H.H. Dr. Mona bint Fahad Al Said, Assistant Vice Chancellor of International Cooperation at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), is in charge of all internationally related activities at the university.

Her mission is to initiate and build solid collaborations with top educational institutions around the world and thus help position SQU among the elite ranked universities. She graduated from the College of Education in the English Department at SQU in 1993, followed by a Master's degree in Curriculum and Teaching methods at the same university. H.H. Dr. Al Said completed her Ph.D. at Kings College, London in 2005 in Special Education Needs and Policy.

H.H. Dr. Al Said developed a wide network of international links with various universities around the world, by means of joint conferences, research initiatives, and student exchanges. She is very active in the field of cultural rapprochement and interrelations between different spectrums of societies both on national and international levels. H.H. Dr. Al Said is the patron of several social initiatives in the Sultanate, including the Children's Public Library, the Children's Association, and the National Association for Cancer. She is a big supporter of issues related to education, woman, and children.

Her Highness Dr. Khoula Al Said, Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition, Royal Hospital, The Royal Hospital, Ministry of Health, Oman



H.H. Dr. Khoula Al Said serves as Senior Consultant of Paediatric Gastroenterology at the Royal Hospital in Oman. Prior to that, she was a Pediatric Gastroenterology Fellow at Alberta Children's Hospital. She earned both her MD (1998) and Bachelors of Science degree (1995) from the College of Medicine at Sultan Qaboos University. H.H. Dr. Al Said is also Associate Designated Official of Post Graduate Medical Education at the Royal Hospital and the Child Health Program Director at the Oman Medical Speciality Board.

She was a Fellow at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada in Pediatrics (2006), and a Fellow at the American Academy of Pediatrics (2004). She has served on a number of healthcare committees, including the Ministry of Health Liver Transplant Committee, The Royal Hospital Child Protection Committee, and the Oman National Liver Transplant Committee.

Dr. Unni Wikan, Professor of Social Anthropology, The University of Oslo



Dr. Unni Wikan was awarded the prestigious Norwegian Freedom of Expression Award in 2004 for "her insightful, openhearted and challenging contributions to the public debate on the value conflicts in multicultural societies". She has studied sociology at the University of Oslo (1965-66), social anthropology at the University of Bergen (1967-68) and Arabic at the American University in Cairo (1968-69).

She is the author of *Behind the Veil in Arabia: Women in Oman* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982). Dr. Wikan has been a visiting professor at many universities across the world, among them Harvard and the University of Chicago, USA; Beersheba University, Israel; L'école des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), Paris; and London School of Economics (LSE). Dr. Wikan has conducted fieldwork in Egypt, Oman, Yemen, Indonesia, Bhutan and the Nordic countries.



Ms. Christine Eickelman, Research Associate, Department of Anthropology, Dartmouth College

Ms. Christine Eickelman conducted anthropological fieldwork in al-Hamra, an oasis in the northern Oman interior and tribal capital of the 'Abriyin, in 1979-80, and has returned to the oasis regularly since then. She is the author of *Women and Community in Oman* (New York University Press, 1984), translated into Arabic by Mostafa Ouajjani and published with an updated introduction (Damascus: Dar al-Ahali, 2011). Her other publications include "Women and Politics in an Arabian Oasis," in *A Way Prepared: Essays on Islamic Culture in Honor of Richard Bayly Winder*, ed. Farhar Kazemi and R.D. McChesney, pp. 199-215 (New York University Press, 1988), "Young, Muslim, and Eager to Learn: Education in the Arab World," *Faces* 8, no. 1 (September 1991): 32-35, and "Fertility and Social Change in Oman: Women's Perspectives," *Middle East Journal* 47, no. 4 (Autumn 1993): 652-66.



Ms. Hamdah Said Al Shamsi, Assistant General Manager, Administration and Finance, The Public Authority for Social Insurance, Oman

Ms. Hamdah Said Al Shamsi is Assistant General Manager for Administration and Finance at The Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI), a position she has held since February 2010. She has extensive experience in finance, accounting, human resource development, and administration. Ms. Al Shamsi earned her Master's degree in Business in Professional Accounting from Victoria University of Technology, Australia, and Bachelor of Science degree in Office Administration from University of South Carolina.

She has played various roles, including being a member of the PASI senior management team, advising the General Manager, and participating in strategic discussion and planning. Ms. Al Shamsi is also a columnist for the Business Section of the Oman Daily Newspaper, a blogger, trainer, and speaker, and has published two books.



Ms. Saada bint Salim bin Mohammed Al Ismaili, Director of the Women's Sport Department, Ministry of Sports Affairs, Oman

Ms. Saada bint Salim bin Mohammed Al Ismaili became Director of the Women's Sport Department at the Ministry of Sports Affairs in Muscat, Oman in 2006. She received her Masters of Science degree in Leisure Management from the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, in 2010, and her Bachelor of Arts degree in Acting and Drama from the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts, in 1992. She has held various positions including Board Member of Oman Olympic Committee, Director of the second Gulf Volleyball Women's Championship 2013, and Chairman of the Committee for Women's Basketball.

FEATURED PERFORMANCE:

Oud Hobbyists Association and Al Najoom Dance Troupe, LOCATION: Bailey Performance Center, 7:00 PM



The **Oud Hobbyists Association** promotes the musical heritage of Oman. The Oud (lute) is a fascinating musical instrument that has long been a source of pride for kings, princes and especially poets. There are many interesting legends about the instruments origins. The word "oud" is derived from the Arabic word referring to the type of wood from which it is made. It has five double-strings (i.e. ten single fretted strings) and sometimes more. The musician uses a "feather" tool to strike the strings while playing. <http://www.oud-ha.gov.om/2010/Default.aspx>



The **Al Najoom Dance Troupe** hails originally from Ja'alan Bani Bu Ali an oasis market town in Oman. Traditional Omani music has a long legacy, where the indigenous Arab Islamic culture has combined with external influences from Oman's trading partners in East Africa and Asia. They are recognized not only for the skill of their musicians and the quality of their singing, but also for the energy and exuberance that they bring to each performance.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPP2prJQgxA>



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