Yaqoob Salim Almahruqi[1]

THE ARCHIVE AS A TOOL FOR IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND FOSTERING BELONGING BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD; THE SULTANATE OF OMAN AS A CASE STUDY[2]

Abstract

Purpose: *This study aims to explore the modern roles of national archives, shifting them from the traditional concept of merely preserving official records and transactions to a strategic framework that views them as active instruments contributing to identity construction, collective consciousness, and national belonging. The paper examines how historical documents, maps, oral memory, and manuscripts function as a sovereign and emotional infrastructure connecting the individual, society, and the state.*

Method/approach: *The researcher utilized a descriptive-analytical approach to ground the theoretical frameworks of archival philosophy, memory politics, and digital citizenship. This was complemented by a case study methodology applied to the Sultanate of Oman as an empirical model, analyzing the institutional initiatives of the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) in oral history, private family archives, cartography, and ancient manuscript preservation.*

Results: *The study revealed that archives serve as an effective mechanism for fusing diverse cultural, linguistic, and geographical streams into a cohesive national identity that supports social stability. Engaging citizens in documenting private family archives significantly reduces the psychological barrier between individuals and state institutions, fostering affective, participatory citizenship. Furthermore, safeguarding cultural security in the contemporary digital era is directly linked to adopting Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies within archival workflows.*

[1] Yaqoob Salim Almahruqi, General Supervisor of Documents and Archives – National Records and Archives Authority, Sultanate of Oman, E-mail: almahruqiyaqoob@gmail.com.

[2] This research was conducted with the support and guidance of Prof. Dr. Roziah binti Sidik and Prof. Dr. Zumhari bin Arifin, Institute of Islamic Civilization, National University of Malaysia (UKM).

Conclusions/findings: *The research concludes that national archives must transition from physical preservation to smart knowledge dissemination. Transforming static records into interactive visual narratives, virtual exhibitions, and educational tools is vital to protect national memory from cultural alienation and engage younger cyber generations effectively.*

Keywords: *archival science, national identity, Sultanate of Oman, oral history, affective citizenship, archival digital transformation*

ARHIV KOT ORODJE ZA OBLIKOVANJE IDENTITETE IN KREPITEV POSAMEZNIKOVE PRIPADNOSTI DRUŽBI V SODOBNEM SVETU: ŠTUDIJA PRIMERA SULTANATA OMAN

Izvleček

Namen: *Raziskava proučuje spreminjajoče se vloge nacionalnih arhivov kot strateških ustanov, ki prispevajo k oblikovanju identitete, občutku pripadnosti in kolektivni zavesti. Obravnava dva sodobna izziva: težave pri vključevanju mlajših digitalnih generacij s tradicionalnimi arhivskimi pristopi ter morebitno slabljenje lokalnih identitet zaradi vse večje izpostavljenosti globalni digitalni kulturi.*

Metode/pristop: *Raziskava združuje opisno-analitični pristop k teoretičnim konceptom s študijo primera Sultanata Oman. Proučuje prizadevanja Nacionalne uprave za dokumente in arhive pri dokumentiranju ustne zgodovine, ohranjanju zasebnih družinskih arhivov ter varovanju arhitekturne in vizualne dediščine.*

Rezultati: *Ugotovitve kažejo, da lahko arhivi kulturno in jezikovno raznolikost povezujejo v skupno nacionalno identiteto, ki podpira družbeno stabilnost. Vključevanje posameznikov v dokumentiranje njihovih družinskih arhivov pomaga zmanjševati psihološko razdaljo med njimi in državo ter spodbuja afektivno in participativno državljanstvo. Ugotovitve poudarjajo tudi tesno povezanost med kulturno varnostjo sodobnih družb in uvajanjem sodobnih tehnologij v arhivsko delo.*

Razprava in sklepi: *Raziskava priporoča preoblikovanje arhivskega gradiva v interaktivne digitalne vsebine, prilagojene interesom mlajših generacij. Predlagani ukrepi vključujejo uporabo umetne inteligence in razširjene resničnosti za*

pripravo virtualnih razstav ter vključevanje izvirnih zgodovinskih dokumentov in korespondence v izobraževalne programe na privlačen način. Namen teh ukrepov je okrepiti povezanost z nacionalnim spominom in preprečevati odtujitev od njega.

Ključne besede: *arhivska filozofija, nacionalna identiteta, Sultanat Oman, ustna zgodovina, afektivno državljanstvo, digitalna preobrazba arhivske dejavnosti.*

L'ARCHIVIO COME STRUMENTO PER LA COSTRUZIONE DELL'IDENTITÀ E IL RAFFORZAMENTO DEL SENSO DI APPARTENENZA DELL'INDIVIDUO ALLA SOCIETÀ NEL MONDO CONTEMPORANEO: IL SULTANATO DELL'OMAN COME CASO DI STUDIO

Abstract

Obiettivo: *Lo studio esamina l'evoluzione del ruolo degli archivi nazionali come istituzioni strategiche che contribuiscono alla costruzione dell'identità, al senso di appartenenza e alla coscienza collettiva. Affronta due sfide contemporanee: la difficoltà di coinvolgere le giovani generazioni digitali attraverso pratiche archivistiche tradizionali e il possibile indebolimento delle identità locali dovuto alla crescente esposizione alla cultura digitale globale.*

Metodo/approccio: *La ricerca combina un approccio descrittivo-analitico ai concetti teorici con un caso di studio relativo al Sultanato dell'Oman. Esamina le iniziative dell'Autorità nazionale per i documenti e gli archivi nella documentazione della storia orale, nella conservazione degli archivi familiari privati e nella salvaguardia del patrimonio architettonico e visivo.*

Risultati: *I risultati indicano che gli archivi possono integrare la diversità culturale e linguistica in un'identità nazionale condivisa che sostiene la stabilità sociale. Il coinvolgimento degli individui nella documentazione dei propri archivi familiari contribuisce a ridurre la distanza psicologica tra loro e lo Stato, favorendo una cittadinanza affettiva e partecipativa. I risultati evidenziano inoltre uno stretto legame tra la sicurezza culturale delle società contemporanee e l'adozione di tecnologie moderne nel lavoro archivistico.*

Discussione e conclusioni: *Lo studio raccomanda di trasformare il materiale archivistico in contenuti digitali interattivi adeguati agli interessi delle giovani generazioni. Le misure proposte comprendono l'impiego dell'intelligenza artificiale e della realtà aumentata per realizzare mostre virtuali e l'integrazione di documenti storici originali e corrispondenza nei programmi educativi in modo coinvolgente. Tali misure mirano a rafforzare il legame con la memoria nazionale e a prevenire l'estraniazione da essa.*

Parole chiave: *filosofia archivistica, identità nazionale, Sultanato dell'Oman, storia orale, cittadinanza affettiva, trasformazione digitale degli archivi.*

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary human thought has witnessed deep and critical revisions within the fields of philosophy and political sociology to redefine the functional roles of knowledge institutions amidst accelerating globalization and digital liquidity. Today, it is no longer academically acceptable to reduce national archives to their traditional physical dimensions as mere repositories for storing expired administrative records and documents. Rather, the modern epistemological perspective views the archive as an active entity that directly contributes to engineering collective consciousness, shaping the national narrative, and instilling the values of belonging and loyalty between the individual and society.

With its holdings of documents, inscriptions, maps, manuscripts, and oral memory, the archive represents the genetic repository of any nation's national identity. It connects the contemporary citizen to a continuous civilizational continuum of ancestral sacrifices and achievements, providing psychological and spatial anchors that safeguard them from cultural alienation. This strategic role of the archive is amplified in societies with deep historical and geopolitical roots. Yet, despite this sovereign and cognitive value, the contemporary archival institution faces a dual challenge threatening its efficacy: many archives remain confined to narrow academic research corridors, creating a sharp communicative disconnect with the cognitive perception patterns of younger and future generations, while globalizing forces threaten local cultural specificities with homogenization and dissolution.

Herein lies the central research problem: the imperative to understand how historical documents, manuscripts, and visual artifacts can transition from passive preservation into active strategic instruments that enhance social cohesion, foster affective citizenship, and safeguard national identity. This study adopts the Sultanate of Oman as an empirical model, given its maritime imperial heritage and harmonious cultural diversity, complemented by a pioneering institutional endeavor led by the National Records and Archives Authority. This makes Oman an exemplary case study to evaluate the success of Arab archival institutions in bridging the gap between the individual, society, and the state through documented national memory.

Accordingly, this research paper seeks to transition the archive from a classical construct to a strategic framework for identity construction, leveraging archival

assets to evoke national emotional resonance across generations in service of a unified identity. The significance of this study lies in enriching the academic literature with an interdisciplinary approach integrating archival science, social psychology, and political science. Methodologically, the paper employs a descriptive-analytical approach to deconstruct the theoretical frameworks of memory politics and digital citizenship, alongside a case study methodology to highlight Oman's experience, examine the impact of its national projects, and explore the future of archival practice in the era of digitization, artificial intelligence, and the information revolution.

1. ARCHIVAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE EVOLVING ROLES OF THE ARCHIVAL ENTITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Contemporary human thought is undergoing profound critical revisions regarding traditional concepts of heritage preservation and historical knowledge management. Within modern academic discourse, it is no longer acceptable to reduce the archive to its passive physical dimension as a repository for the past or a storage space for neglected papers. Hence, we seek to deconstruct archival philosophy and examine the fundamental transformations in its roles within the contemporary world, tracing its trajectory from a bureaucratic tool for maintaining administrative records to an active cyber and cognitive domain that contributes to identity construction and guides national narratives.

Through this lens, this section addresses three interconnected dimensions. First, it investigates how the archive reproduces national identity and builds communities grounded in shared civilizational roots. Second, it analyzes the politics of memory and systematic forgetting, exploring how cognitive conflicts are navigated to determine what is commemorated in collective memory and what is excluded. Finally, the third dimension explores the impact of digital transformation on the democratization of archival knowledge and the emergence of digital citizenship, which has liberated the archive from its traditional isolation, turning it into an interactive daily experience connecting the individual, society, and the state within an open sphere.

1.1 FROM PRESERVING HISTORY TO CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY

In contemporary philosophical practice, the archive is no longer a passive repository for dead documents or a bureaucratic tool for keeping historical records. Instead, it has become a dynamic entity instrumental in engineering collective consciousness and shaping national identity. Derrida (1996), in his foundational thesis *Archive Fever*, notes that the archive does not merely record a past event; rather, the archival structure itself produces the event and determines the conditions of its future appearance. Thus, the archive creates history rather than merely transmitting it.

From this standpoint, the archival institution transforms from a custodian of records into a creator of cultural reference points. The processes of appraisal and classification to which archives are subjected directly contribute to formulating what Anderson (2006) terms "imagined communities." Here, documents, manuscripts, and symbolic photographs constitute the raw material through which individuals imagine their belonging to a unified nation with shared roots. Consequently, the archive becomes a vital instrument for anchoring identity by connecting the contemporary citizen to a continuous chain of political triumphs or civilizational achievements.

1.2 THE POLITICS OF MEMORY AND FORGETTING

The philosophy of the archive is intrinsically linked to the concept of archival authority. The archive is not a neutral space; it is an arena for executing policies of selection. Schwartz and Cook (2002) define the archive as a tool of power capable of granting a voice to certain documents while marginalizing others. This systematic selection gives rise to what is known as a society's selective memory.

The decision to preserve a specific document is simultaneously a decision to forget others-a phenomenon termed systematic institutional forgetting. Foucault (1972), in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, posits that the archive is the system that governs what can be said and what cannot be said within a culture. Control over the archive thus equates to control over the national narrative. Contemporary societies utilize the archive to reinvent their past in alignment with present aspirations and core identity principles, making the archive a strategic instrument for fostering social cohesion and integrating diverse cultural components under a unified narrative umbrella.

1.3 ARCHIVES AND DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

The twenty-first century has witnessed a radical shift in the philosophy of archival access, driven by the digital revolution. This transformation has shifted the archive from a closed physical space, historically restricted to an academic and research elite, into an open domain that supports the democratization of knowledge (Ketelaar, 2008).

Digitization fosters the rise of archive-based digital citizenship, where interactive digital platforms enable ordinary citizens-particularly youth-to access, interact with, and contribute to historical records through crowdsourcing and participatory archiving of written and oral local memory. This digital interaction bridges the gap between the individual and official institutions, converting the archive from a rigid, elitist entity into a lived daily experience that promotes self-education and deepens awareness of national rights and the society's historical continuum within the global virtual space (Jimerson, 2009).

Based on the foregoing, the contemporary archive has evolved from a site of document preservation to a locus for meaning production and knowledge authority. The true value of an archival institution is no longer measured by the volume of manuscripts and documents on its shelves, but by its capacity to transform this static documentary asset into a vibrant cognitive force that enhances social cohesion, anchors national belonging, and fortifies local identity against cross-border cultural globalization.

The roles of the archival entity in the contemporary world are no longer an academic luxury or an isolated museum activity; they constitute a sovereign, strategic instrument for engineering a nation's cultural and social security. The researcher posits that the power of the archive to select what is remembered and what is forgotten places contemporary archival professionals before a major ethical and historical responsibility. Consequently, relying solely on official archives is insufficient; flexible archival strategies must be adopted to capture the margins and oral memories of society.

Accordingly, the researcher concludes that the success of the archive as an instrument for fostering belonging hinges on the institution's ability to achieve a precise balance among three pillars: the historical authenticity of the material, distributive justice in digital access, and communicative intelligence in transforming raw documents into engaging visual narratives that meet the expectations of contemporary generations

2. THE SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ROLE OF THE ARCHIVE IN BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

National archives cannot be truly understood if isolated from their human context. A historical document is not merely a static physical entity; it is a psychological and social vector capable of shaping emotional bonds and framing societal structures. This section aims to explore the social and psychological dimensions of archival work, examining how the archive transforms into a resilient bridge connecting the individual to their societal environment and broader national sphere in the contemporary world.

By deconstructing this interactive relationship, this section addresses three fundamental dimensions. The first focuses on the psycho-emotional aspect by studying the impact of visual and oral memory (photographs, arts, and sound recordings) in evoking national sentiment and creating intergenerational connections. The second transitions to a sociological perspective to analyze the archive's role as a tool for social cohesion, capable of absorbing cultural diversity and fusing it into a unifying identity. The third dimension explores the psycho-social dialectic between individual and collective identity, investigating how contemporary citizens discover their personal roots and legal guarantees within the broader national archive.

2.1. FOSTERING BELONGING THROUGH VISUAL AND ORAL MEMORY: EMOTIONAL IMPACT AND AFFECTIVE RESONANCE

Visual and audio archives possess an exceptional capacity to transcend temporal barriers and evoke emotional responses that written text alone cannot stimulate. Contemporary psychological research indicates that historical photographs, ancient sound recordings, and inherited visual arts act as affective catalysts that strengthen psychological attachment to place and homeland (Assmann, 2011).

An archival photograph-such as scenes of traditional marketplaces, the faces of ancestors at work, or early images of national institutions-is not merely read as cognitive material; it is experienced as an emotional encounter. Barthes (1981) posits that the photograph holds an existential power that brings the past into the present with striking immediacy, generating a profound sense of pride and affective empathy for the sacrifices of previous generations.

When contemporary youth interact with oral history recordings-such as seafaring narratives, traditional folk songs, or live speeches of founding leaders-what social psychology terms "intergenerational contact" occurs. This contact transforms history from a dry textbook into a living legacy. Young individuals no longer feel disconnected from their past; rather, they recognize themselves as links in a continuous human chain. This deepens affective citizenship and mitigates the psychological alienation imposed by accelerating digital globalization (Misztal, 2003).

2.2. THE ARCHIVE AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL COHESION: MANAGING DIVERSITY AND SHAPING A UNIFYING IDENTITY

From a sociological perspective, the archive serves as the institutional space that curbs divisive or sectarian tendencies by providing a visual and documentary narrative that highlights cohesion and integration. Contemporary nations face a continuous challenge in managing cultural, linguistic, and geographical diversity within their borders; here, the archive emerges as an instrument of inclusion rather than exclusion (Cook, 2013).

When a national archival institution actively represents the documents and heritage of all social, tribal, and cultural components without discrimination, it legitimately and historically acknowledges each group's contribution to building the nation. This comprehensive documentation achieves what Jimerson (2009) terms "archival justice," which directly aids in dissolving sub-national divides.

The archive integrates diversity into a unified collective identity by demonstrating how these groups historically converged through trade networks, intermarriage, and mutual defense of the homeland. Historical documents become empirical evidence that societal strength lies in harmonious diversity, thereby protecting the social fabric from fragmentation and enhancing social capital built on mutual trust and recognition under the umbrella of the modern state (Ketelaar, 2008).

2.3. INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY VERSUS COLLECTIVE IDENTITY: SEARCHING FOR PERSONAL ROOTS IN THE PUBLIC ARCHIVE

The relationship between the individual and the national archive represents a deep psychological dialectic oscillating between the desire for self-distinctiveness and the need for collective belonging. In contemporary societies, many individuals experience identity crises resulting from rapid urbanization and the dissolution of extended family structures. Consequently, the national archive transforms into

a therapeutic and psychological destination where individuals seek their social placement (Yakel, 2003).

This dimension manifests clearly through three primary archival conduits where the personal intersects with the public:

- **Family Archives and Genealogies**: An individual's search for family trees and domestic manuscripts preserved in the national archive is not mere intellectual curiosity; it is a deeply rooted psychological need for self-affirmation and historical positioning (constructing individual roots).
- **Historical Property Records (Deeds and Endowments)**: These documents serve as a material and legal extension of the family's presence. When a citizen discovers an ancestral property deed, it instills a profound sense of legitimacy and geographical citizenship within the nation.
- **Social Integration**: When an individual sees their family name, village, or an ancestor's achievement officially documented within the national archive, the sharp psychological barrier between the "individual I" and the "collective We" dissolves (Halbwachs, 1992). The archive shifts from a static administrative document belonging to the state into a personal mirror reflecting individual dignity and heritage, making the preservation and defense of the archive synonymous with defending the self and family memory.

Based on the advanced analysis of these social and psychological dimensions, this research concludes that the archive serves as the emotional and social infrastructure upon which major societal consensuses are built. The archive is not merely a mechanism for verifying past facts; it is a psycho-social technology utilized to manage the present and secure the future by balancing individual emotions with collective aspirations.

The researcher posits that the national archive must entirely shed its traditional mantle as a rigid administrative body and be redefined as a social institution for national identity. Neglecting the archive's emotional impact squanders immense motivational and civic potential that could otherwise safeguard societies against intrusive ideologies and fragmentation.

Furthermore, successfully building bridges between the individual and society requires engaging local communities and inspiring family interest through

community workshops dedicated to restoring domestic memory records. It also demands leveraging interactive digital display platforms that speak to younger generations in their modern visual and auditory language. Linking citizens to their personal archives-such as genealogies and historical deeds-transforms citizenship from an abstract legal construct into a vibrant, culturally rooted reality, wherein the state's narrative becomes identical to the collective and personal narrative of every citizen.

3. CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR THE ARCHIVE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

The role of the contemporary archival institution extends beyond preserving the achievements of the past and managing the demands of the present to formulating proactive approaches that anticipate the features of the future cyber and cultural environment. Examining the future prospects of the archive is no longer a theoretical luxury; it has become a strategic necessity dictated by rapid technological transformations and cross-border waves of cultural openness. This forward-looking section seeks to present a critical and in-depth reading of the future challenges facing archival institutions, both locally and globally.

Through this prospective vision, the discussion centres on two integrated strategic dimensions. The first examines the technical and communicative aspect by analysing the challenges of digitization and artificial intelligence, exploring how the archive can be reinvented as an engaging platform for the current digital generation and subsequent cyber generations. The second shifts toward the cultural and sovereign dimension to explore the role of the archive as a defensive bulwark safeguarding local identities from dissolution and assimilation in the face of cultural globalization and global homogenization.

3.1. CHALLENGES OF DIGITIZATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: REINVENTING THE ARCHIVE TO ENGAGE THE CURRENT GENERATION

The contemporary archive faces a sharp communicative disconnect between the nature of traditional documentary materials and the cognitive perception patterns of the current digital generation and the generations that follow-cohorts born into a networked environment that consume information through rapid, interactive, and

visual media (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). The digital transformation of archives is no longer confined to merely scanning documents; rather, it extends to a smart transformation that leverages artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and machine learning algorithms to break the rigidity of historical documents (Bantin, 2016).

Advanced natural language processing (NLP) and optical character recognition (OCR) technologies enable the conversion of ancient manuscripts and records into live, smart-searchable texts, automatically classifying them by subject and context. Furthermore, generative artificial intelligence, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) represent revolutionary tools for humanizing the archive and transforming it into an immersive experience. Young users can step inside a historical document or interact with 3D-embodied figures speaking on the basis of authentic archival records and correspondence (Gilliland, 2014).

The deployment of these technologies liberates the archive from its elitist mold, re-presenting it as a platform for interactive content creation and edutainment. This technological dynamism fosters a historical consciousness among younger generations that aligns with their digital vernacular, transforming the archive into a vibrant space that sparks intellectual curiosity, cultivates digital citizenship values, and equips individuals with critical immunity to evaluate historical narratives promoted by unvetted social media platforms (Cox, 2020).

3.2. ARCHIVES IN THE FACE OF CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION: SAFEGUARDING SPECIFICITY AND PROTECTING IDENTITIES FROM DISSOLUTION

Cultural globalization and cross-continental media flows exert unprecedented pressure toward cultural homogenization, threatening the cultural specificities and local identities of societies-particularly developing ones-with dissolution and extinction. Within this open global sphere, the national archive transcends its administrative function to become a strategic instrument for preserving cultural sovereignty and serving as the first line of defence for national memory (Assmann, 2020).

The archive constitutes the unique physical, legal, and historical documentation that proves a nation's civilizational distinctiveness. It encompasses the intricacies of social structure, ancient legal systems, and local intellectual and literary output, alongside intangible archives such as customs, traditions, and performing arts (Featherstone, 2006). When the state actively mobilizes its archival holdings,

it presents society with its historical authenticity and protects it from cultural disorientation in an age of globalized information flows.

Schwartz (2007) posits that safeguarding archives and making them accessible through modern means operates as a mechanism of cultural resistance against value infiltration. Archives highlight the strengths and authenticity of local history, assuring present generations that their society is not a transient consumer of civilization, but an authentic producer of it with deep historical roots. Consequently, the archive transitions from a repository of past evidence into a driving force for building a conscious citizenship capable of engaging with globalization and benefiting from its horizons without forfeiting the core pillars of its identity and national fundamentals (Xie, 2019).

Based on these prospective insights, the research concludes that the future of the contemporary archive is contingent upon its ability to adapt to two simultaneous revolutions: the technological revolution represented by artificial intelligence and digitization, and the cultural revolution manifested in the ramifications of globalization and value liquidity. The successful archival institution of the future is one capable of deploying the tools of the first revolution as strategic allies to counter the consequences of the second.

The researcher posits that the greatest challenge facing the future archive is not a technological hurdle of acquiring smart technologies per se, but rather a challenge of vision and communicative methodology among leadership in archival institutions. Confining documents behind silent digital servers under the guise of digital preservation is merely an extension of the sterile, classical concept of paper storage. Building a forward-looking archive requires adopting a philosophy of an "open and culturally leveraged archive" by converting national documentary assets into raw materials for content creators, directors, historical and educational video game developers, and virtual museum designers. This approach alone can bridge the gap with the current digital generation, which no longer searches for information in catalogue cards, but consumes it through interactive smart screens.

Finally, the researcher concludes that the cultural and sovereign security of states in the coming decades will depend directly on their success in archiving their digital present and efficiently preserving their documentary past through smart means. This will ensure that local identity remains a living, resilient, and com-

petitive component within the global virtual sphere, rather than leaving the cyber landscape open to currents of cultural homogenization that erase the memories of peoples.

4.THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL RECORDS AND ARCHIVES AUTHORITY IN IDENTITY FORMATION AND FOSTERING BELONGING

The transition from general theoretical and philosophical frameworks to practical application represents a methodological necessity to test the effectiveness of the contemporary archival institution in shaping collective consciousness and embedding values of belonging. The Sultanate of Oman offers a unique empirical model and a rich research laboratory in this context. It possesses deep historical roots as a maritime empire with global civilizational reach, complemented in the modern era by a pioneering institutional endeavor led by the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA).

This section seeks to deconstruct the Omani context through four primary practical dimensions: first, examining the historical specificity and diverse identity streams of the Omani Empire; second, analyzing the pioneering institutional and legislative structure of the NRAA; third, highlighting efforts to document oral history to preserve intangible memory; and fourth, analyzing the invocation of visual and architectural identity through archival evidence.

4.1 . DIVERSE STREAMS OF IDENTITY AT THE NATIONAL RECORDS AND ARCHIVES AUTHORITY

The Sultanate of Oman holds an exceptional historical and geopolitical position in the Arabian Peninsula. Rather than existing as an isolated administrative entity, it operated as a maritime empire whose influence and ties extended from the shores of the Arabian Gulf to East Africa (Zanzibar and Mombasa) and parts of the Indian subcontinent and Balochistan (Al-Hashmi, 2018). This expansive reach generated a prolific historical archive spanning multiple languages and facets, including Arabic, Swahili, English, Persian, and French.

Oman's maritime and commercial archives reflect a concept of open identity and civilizational tolerance. The documents and correspondence exchanged between Omani sultans and global powers contribute to formulating a contemporary

national narrative that instills values of long-standing political and diplomatic leadership in the consciousness of Omani citizens (Al-Maamari, 2021). Furthermore, the archive plays a vital role in accommodating harmonious local cultural diversity. The Omani state has successfully integrated the private archives of diverse linguistic and cultural groups-such as the Mehri and Jibbali communities in the south, as well as Swahili-speaking Omanis returning from East Africa-into a unifying national identity framework. Consequently, the archive serves as a mechanism for reinforcing social cohesion rather than retreating into narrow sub-national identities (Al-Siyabi, 2020).

4.2. THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL RECORDS AND ARCHIVES AUTHORITY IN FOSTERING IDENTITY AND NATIONAL BELONGING

Established by Royal Decree No. 60/2007, the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) represents a qualitative leap forward for archival institutions in the Arab world. Its mandate extends far beyond the bureaucratic preservation of state administrative records to encompass a comprehensive national strategy aimed at making the archive an active partner in constructing contemporary citizenship.

A. Private Documents

Among the most prominent practical projects fostering belonging is the National Project for Collecting and Tracking Private Documents and Records. This field and institutional campaign encourages Omani citizens and families to register and deposit their private documents, manuscripts, old photographs, and property deeds with the Authority in exchange for restored and digitally preserved copies. This intersection between the state's official archive and the private records of the individual or family creates a profound psychological shift: ordinary citizens come to see their personal family history as an authentic, official component of the nation's overarching historical narrative, thereby deepening loyalty and emotional attachment to the state (Al-Kharusi, 2022). This institutional recognition fosters loyalty and reproduces national history as a shared, participatory property created by all, rather than a top-down narrative imposed from above (Ketelaar, 2008).

B. Document Exhibitions and Conferences

Local and international documentary exhibitions, along with global conferences organized by the NRAA, serve as key practical instruments for disseminating ar-

chival knowledge and enhancing societal awareness regarding the importance of records. Rather than functioning as traditional display platforms, these events operate as interactive educational spaces that grant the public direct access to original documents, manuscripts, and historical photographs, reinforcing their appreciation of records as primary sources of historical knowledge (Jimerson, 2009). These activities also solidify national identity among younger generations by presenting living evidence of the nation's trajectory and achievements, sparking feelings of pride and belonging. Furthermore, these exhibitions showcase Oman's historical diplomatic correspondence with global powers over the centuries, emphasizing its pioneering role as an open maritime empire dedicated to peace and safe trade (Al-Maamari, 2021). International archival conferences also serve as platforms for exchanging professional expertise, discussing advanced practices, and adopting cutting-edge management techniques. Thus, these events combine educational and national dimensions to build a firm societal consensus grounded in safeguarding documentary heritage for future generations (Assmann, 2011).

C. Oral Archives and Preserving Intangible Memory

The Omani archival institution recognized early on that a significant portion of the social history and cultural identity of Omani society resides in memory rather than text-specifically within the oral recollections of elders, navigators, artisans, and trusted narrators. Consequently, the NRAA launched the Oral History Project as a strategic pillar of the national archive (Al-Maawali & Al-Yaqoobi, 2021). Specialized research teams travel across Omani governorates and districts to record live testimony on political and social transformations, daily life, customs, traditions, folk arts, proverbs, and traditional irrigation systems (*Aflaj*) (Al-Gheilani, 2023). The oral archive operates as a cultural bulwark protecting Omani identity from dissolving amidst globalizing and digital trends. Transcribing these interviews and transforming them into accessible visual and audio digital content re-links contemporary youth to their society's authenticity and inherited ethical values, bolstering cultural immunity and civilizational self-awareness. In an era where globalized trends across social media platforms promote uniform consumerist and expressive behaviors, individuals risk losing their distinctiveness and falling into psychological and cultural alienation (Misztal, 2003). The oral archive acts as an umbilical cord connecting the contemporary virtual sphere

to the roots of land and history, safeguarding youth from assimilation into incoming cultural patterns (Vansina, 1985).

D. Visual and Architectural Identity in Omani Archival Evidence

Manifestations of national identity are not confined to linguistic dimensions or written and spoken political narratives; they materialize visually within the architectural landscape that defines the nation's physical presence. The functional role of the archive in Oman extends to preserving and guiding the country's visual and architectural identity. Omani archives abound with historical maps, engineering blueprints, and old photographs that document the structure of forts, castles, traditional markets, and -Aflaj- systems listed as UNESCO World Heritage sites (Al-Busaidi, 2021). Providing access to these archival materials for engineers, planners, and cultural decision-makers is not intended for rigid imitation, but rather to reproduce contemporary Omani architectural spaces infused with an authentic spirit. The Sultanate maintains a unique architectural style combining modernity with historical authenticity derived from its visual archives-a harmony evident in major official landmarks such as the Royal Opera House Muscat, Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, and national museums. This visual presence, anchored in historical documentation, instills a sense of stability and cultural continuity in citizens' daily physical environment, reinforcing pride in a distinct identity resilient against global architectural homogenization and urban standardization (Featherstone, 2006).

The Omani model of archival management and deployment demonstrates a successful transition from classical record-keeping to a comprehensive strategic paradigm. The Sultanate's rich historical specificity, paired with conscious institutional willpower, offers a pioneering experience proving that the archive can serve as a primary engine for cultural development and conscious citizenship.

The researcher posits that Oman, through the National Records and Archives Authority, has presented an exemplary model for dismantling archival elitism-transforming records from an exclusive tool of authority or academia into a public asset supporting societal identity. The success of the Omani approach lies in integrating citizens' private archives into the national project, making individuals active partners in constructing their nation's memory rather than passive consumers.

However, the real challenge facing the Omani archive today and in the future centers on creating engaging digital archival content. Possessing vast documentary holdings and rich oral histories is insufficient to influence younger generations unless these materials are converted into formats suited to the digital age-such as short documentary films for social media platforms, interactive augmented reality (AR) applications within archaeological sites, and artificial intelligence tools that streamline document retrieval through compelling storytelling. Continuously developing the legal and technical infrastructure of the Omani archive, alongside enhancing archival education in academic curricula, will ensure that Omani memory remains dynamic, vibrant, and capable of generating and renewing belonging in the hearts of individuals and society amidst a changing world.

5. THE SULTANATE OF OMAN (A CASE STUDY)

In this context, the Sultanate of Oman constitutes a prominent model and a rich research laboratory, owing to its historical depth and geopolitical profile that transcends the concept of the "modern nation-state" to rest upon a deeply rooted maritime imperial heritage. This section seeks to deconstruct the historical and anthropological specificity of Oman through two main dimensions: first, analyzing the maritime and commercial archive and its role in shaping an open identity and civilizational communication; second, exploring the manifestations of harmonious cultural and linguistic diversity within the archive, examining how these multiple streams fused into a unifying national identity framework that bolstered values of belonging and social cohesion.

5.1 THE OMANI MARITIME AND COMMERCIAL ARCHIVE: A STREAM FOR OPENNESS AND CIVILIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

The historical geography of the Sultanate of Oman as a maritime empire dictated a unique pattern of archival documentation. Omani records were not merely internal bureaucratic logs; rather, they consisted of ocean-crossing correspondence, treaties, and commercial ledgers that reflected Omani political and economic influence extending from the shores of the Arabian Gulf to East Africa (Zanzibar, Mombasa, and Kilwa) and the fringes of the Indian subcontinent and Balochistan (Al-Hashmi, 2018). This prolific maritime archive, housed at the National Re-

cords and Archives Authority in the Sultanate of Oman, contributes to shaping the contours of contemporary Omani identity and steering it toward values of belonging grounded in openness and tolerance.

When contemporary Omani citizens evoke archival evidence-such as Sayyid Said bin Sultan's diplomatic correspondence with international powers in the nineteenth century, or records of Omani merchant fleet movements between Muscat and Indian and African platforms-it solidifies within their collective consciousness that their civilizational selfhood is fundamentally built on "humanitarian diplomacy" and the capacity to absorb and coexist with the Other (Al-Maamari, 2021).

Here, the commercial and maritime archive operates as a psychological and social driver, instilling pride in historical leadership and transforming tolerance from a mere modern political slogan into documented historical genes substantiated by official evidence and records. This endows society with an intrinsic immunity against insular tendencies or fanaticism.

5.2 HARMONIOUS CULTURAL DIVERSITY: FUSING CULTURAL STREAMS INTO A UNIFYING IDENTITY

Oman represents a distinctive anthropological case in managing social and cultural diversity within a unified national framework. The Omani archive contains living documentary evidence that reflects clear linguistic and cultural pluralism, such as the historical presence of the Mehri and Jibbali (Shahri) languages in southern Oman, the Baloch and Lawati streams along the coasts, as well as the rich Swahili stream resulting from Omani expansion in East Africa and those returning from it (Al-Siyabi, 2020).

The role of the archive as an instrument for social cohesion is manifested in how it absorbed this diversity. Historical documents, deeds, folklore, and oral archives belonging to these components were not treated institutionally as isolated entities or threats to the official identity; rather, they were collected and recorded as authentic streams enriching the collective national body. Oman's historical archive illustrates how these groups fused ethnically, economically, and defensively under the umbrella of "Omani citizenship" across the ages (Al-Kharusi, 2020).

Through this documentary fusion, contemporary citizens belonging to any of these streams find that their ancestors' cultural, linguistic, and social heritage is celebrated and officially preserved in the national archive as an integral part of

the nation's overall history. This documented institutional recognition provides psychological reassurance to social components, blocks narratives of marginalization, and integrates diversity into a unified national narrative that deepens belonging to the homeland and state as the protector, documenter, and unifier of all these shared achievements.

Based on the preceding data, the empirical Omani model demonstrates that the richness and diversity of the archive represent a source of qualitative strength for both state and society simultaneously. Oman's historical specificity has enabled it to possess a dynamic, cross-border archive capable of accommodating local variances and fusing them into a balanced and flexible identity matrix.

The researcher posits that utilizing the Omani model as a case study in this research paper lends realistic and empirical weight that transcends Western theoretical archival frameworks. The Omani archive breaks the traditional concept of the archive as a tool for consolidating one-sided administrative authority, presenting it instead as a flexible, democratic vessel that accommodates civilizational pluralism. It is essential to highlight this pluralistic advantage in international academic forums as a pioneering model for managing diversity through documented national memory, thereby offering scientific and practical solutions for contemporary societies struggling with identity fragmentation and social cohesion crises.

5.3 THE ROLE OF INSCRIPTIONS, MAPS, INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE, AND MANUSCRIPTS IN FOSTERING OMANI NATIONAL IDENTITY

The Sultanate of Oman possesses an exceptional wealth of physical documentary evidence spanning extended historical epochs-beginning with ancient rock carvings and inscriptions, passing through historical maps and diplomatic correspondence with global monarchs and sultans, and culminating in jurisprudential, scientific, and literary manuscripts. This research seeks to deconstruct these four documentary streams and analyze their psycho-social impact in formulating the Omani civilizational selfhood and anchoring awareness of national identity.

5.3.1 ANCIENT ROCK CARVINGS AND INSCRIPTIONS: THE LEGITIMACY OF ROOTEDNESS AND GEOGRAPHICAL CITIZENSHIP

Rock inscriptions and ancient writings scattered across the valleys and mountains of the Sultanate of Oman (such as the inscriptions of Wadi Al-Sahtan, Jabal

Al-Jalb, and Dhofar Governorate) constitute the oldest physical documents connecting contemporary Omani citizens to their national geography. These inscriptions, some dating back to prior to the third millennium BCE, feature writings in ancient South Arabian scripts such as Musnad and Thamudic, alongside rock carvings documenting daily life, hunting, battles, and maritime connections of the ancient region of "Magan" (Al-Jahwari, 2019).

From a psychological and social perspective, these inscriptions endow the Omani individual with a sense of historical legitimacy and absolute geographical citizenship. Viewing these writings on the homeland's rocks assures younger generations that their presence on this land is not transient, but rather an extension of an ancient human and civilizational continuum that mastered writing and record-keeping and interacted with its civilizational surroundings since the dawn of history. This rock-carved archive functions as an anchor for national identity against trends of westernization, instilling in collective consciousness the concept of authenticity and organic attachment to the national soil (Assmann, 2011). This reality manifests in two primary sites reflecting the anthropological specificity of Omani identity:

A. The "Hasat Bin Salt" Rock in Wadi Al-Sahtan: A Document of Stability and Social Organization: The famous "Hasat Bin Salt" rock, located in the course of Wadi Al-Sahtan in the Wilayat of Rustaq (South Al Batinah Governorate), is considered one of the purest prominent rock documents in the Arabian Peninsula dating back to the Bronze Age (Al-Jahwari, 2019). As shown in (Figure 1), this large granite rock features incised and relief carvings executed near life-size, endowing it with superior documentary value.

An analysis of the inscription's content reveals a main scene depicting two human figures of men in a face-to-face stance with precise dynamic movement, holding bows, arrows, and spears, surrounded by drawings of wild animals such as ibexes and panthers. This scene documents the transition from random hunting to organized hunting and joint defense of the sanctuary (Hima). This phenomenon represents an early social marker reflecting features of collective organization, the emergence of ownership concepts, and human integration aimed at protecting the land-forming in its entirety the initial foundational nucleus for the crystallization of the concept of citizenship and the deepening of collective belonging values (Al-Harthi, 2021).

Figure 1: The Archaeological "Hasat Bin Salt" Rock in Wadi Al-Sahtan, Wilayat of Rustaq



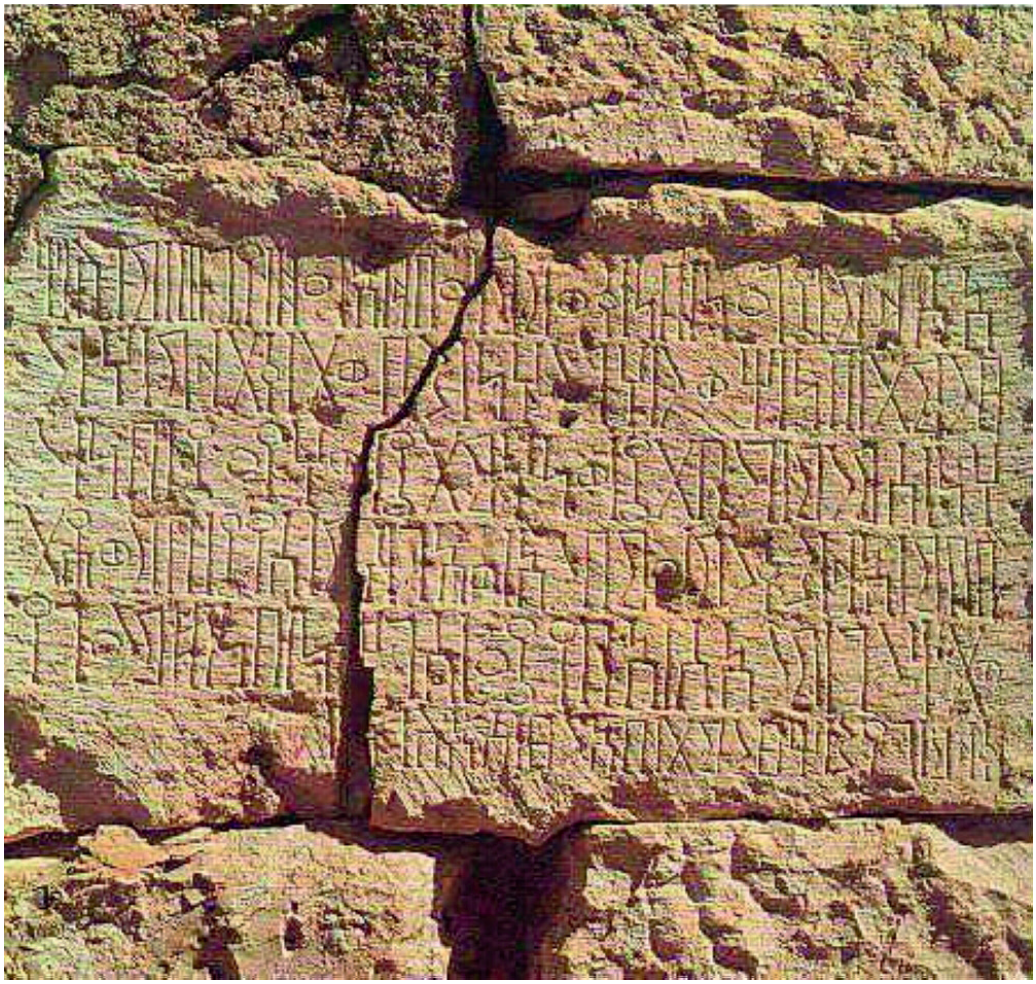
Note. The figure illustrates the overall structure of the granite rock bearing archaeological inscriptions that document early human settlement patterns in the Sultanate of Oman. Adapted from Archaeological Landmarks in Northern Oman (p. 45), by N. S. Al-Harthi, 2021, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

B. Writings and Inscriptions of the Dhofar Caves: Linguistic Documentation and the Roots of the Alphabet

In the southern part of Oman, rock inscriptions acquire an advanced linguistic and scribal dimension. The caves and valleys of Dhofar Governorate (such as Wadi Nahiz, Wadi Jurziz, and the Shaat area) abound with hundreds of inscriptions executed through carving or painted with red and yellow vegetable dyes, locally known as the "Ancient Omani Script" or modified South Arabian Musnad (Al-Mashani, 2018).

The transformation of rock art from mere pictorial representations of animals into "alphabetic symbols and phonetic scripts" demonstrates that the ancient Omani society developed a dedicated symbolic system to document property rights, tribal names, and religious rituals. This documentative and linguistic independence, extending back to the first millennium BCE, provides contemporary national identity with a deeply rooted historical dimension, proving that Oman was a culture-producing and knowledge-generating environment rather than a mere passive consumer of it (Al-Mashani, 2018).

Figure 2: Rock Inscription in the Omani South Arabian Musnad Scrip



Note. Adapted from Rock Writings and Inscriptions in Dhofar Governorate (p. 45), by A. Al-Mashani, 2022, Al-Ithra Publishing. Copyright 2022 by Al-Ithra Publishing.

5.4. HISTORICAL MAPS ACROSS ERAS: ARCHIVING SOVEREIGNTY AND CIVILIZATIONAL BOUNDARIES

Historical maps-whether drawn by Muslim geographers such as Al-Idrisi and Al-Muqaddasi, or Portuguese, Dutch, and British maritime charts from the great centuries of exploration-represent vital sovereign documents in preserving Omani national identity. These maps clearly delineate Oman's geographical and political boundaries, highlighting strategic Omani ports such as Muscat, Sohar, Sur, and Dhofar as pivotal nodes in global trade networks and Indian Ocean navigation (Al-Busaidi, 2022).

Making these maps accessible and studying them academically and museologi-

cally fosters "geographical and sovereign awareness" among Omanis. The recurrent appearance of the name "Oman" or the "Gulf of Oman" in global atlas maps across various eras instills in the contemporary citizen a sense of pride and resilience. It proves with definitive cartographic evidence that the Omani state has consistently been an internationally recognized entity with geopolitical weight and fundamental contributions to shaping global free trade (Black, 2000).

A. Classical Geography: Ptolemy's Map (2nd Century CE)

In the Geography of the Greek scholar Claudius Ptolemy, the Arabian Peninsula appeared with a precise delineation of the Omani coastline. Strategic Omani locations and ports were mapped-as documented in (Figure 3)-such as the port of Sumhuram in Dhofar, alongside other ports in northern Oman under the Latin designation Moscha Nobilis. Moscha signifies Muscat or the port of frankincense, while Nobilis denotes noble, distinguished, or magnificent (Al-Nasri, 2020). These classical maps serve as international geographical documents proving that Oman's commercial and maritime identity has been an integral part of the global trade system (the Frankincense Route and the Maritime Silk Road) since pre-Islamic times

Figure 3: Map of the Arabian Peninsula by the Greek Historian Claudius Ptolemy Showing Omani Coasts and Ports



Note. The figure illustrates the early geographical and political dimensions of Oman in global classical cartography, highlighting the precise mapping of the coastline and sovereign ports integral to international trade. Adapted from Oman in Historical and Ancient Maps (p. 112), by S. J. Al-Nasri, 2020, Dar Al-Dhakira for Publishing and Distribution.

B. Islamic Geography: Al-Sharif Al-Idrisi's Map (12th Century CE)

Cartographic documentation of Oman reached its scientific zenith during the Islamic era, most notably in the works of Al-Sharif Al-Idrisi in his treatise Nuzhat al-Mushtaq fi Ikhtiraq al-Afaq (The Excursion of the One Who Yearns to Penetrate the Horizons). As shown in (Figure 4), Al-Idrisi's circular world map highlighted the Sea of Oman as an independent and major body of water connecting the Arabian Gulf to the Indian Ocean (Al-Nasri, 2020).

Furthermore, the map accurately designated prominent Omani urban centers, such as Sohar-described as the metropolis of Oman and its most populous city-alongside Muscat and Qalhat. The persistent presence of the name of Oman, its sea, and its cities across these historical maps carries significant political weight and endows contemporary Omani citizens with a sense of stability and historical continuity. It demonstrates that the nation's cognitive and geographical boundaries are not the product of modern agreements, but rather a documented geographical and cultural entity firmly established in global intellectual consciousness over the centuries (Al-Nasri, 2020).

Figure 4: Al-Sharif Al-Idrisi's Circular World Map Showing the Geography and Historical Urban Centers of Oman



Note. The figure illustrates the leadership of the Islamic cartographic school in documenting the geographical and political identity of the Sultanate of Oman and its sea as a strategic connecting node in international navigation throughout the Middle Ages. Adapted from Oman in Historical and Ancient Maps (p. 143), by S. J. Al-Nasri, 2020, Dar Al-Dhakira for Publishing and Distribution.

This foundational and conceptual section concludes that historical documents in their broadest sense-encompassing inscriptions, cuneiform tablets, and maps-serve as the cornerstone supporting the national identity and civilizational selfhood of any nation, prior to examining any specific country case study. Projecting this theoretical premise onto the Omani heritage, this study demonstrates that Oman possesses an interconnected and deeply rooted documentary matrix that removes any doubt regarding the authenticity of its statehood.

The Bronze Age engravings-such as the "Hasat Bin Salt" rock-and the cave writings of Dhofar establish the early social organization and linguistic independence of Omani society. Concurrently, Mesopotamian cuneiform records referencing Magan and Mazun, alongside classical and medieval world maps by Ptolemy and Al-Idrisi, provide conclusive international recognition of Oman as an independent political and maritime power with clearly defined and acknowledged geographical boundaries centuries prior to the advent of Islam.

This comprehensive physical documentary heritage forms the solid emotional and cognitive foundation that paved the way for Oman's voluntary reception of its major foundational document-the Noble Prophetic Letters-making its principles a supreme reference framework that safeguards internal cohesion and protects national security in its most holistic sense.

5.5. DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCE WITH GLOBAL MONARCHS AND SULTANS:

Fostering Pride and Sovereign DiplomacyOfficial diplomatic correspondence exchanged between the Imams and Sultans of Oman and world leaders throughout history represents one of the most refined documentary attestations enhancing national belonging and loyalty. The Omani archive abounds with:

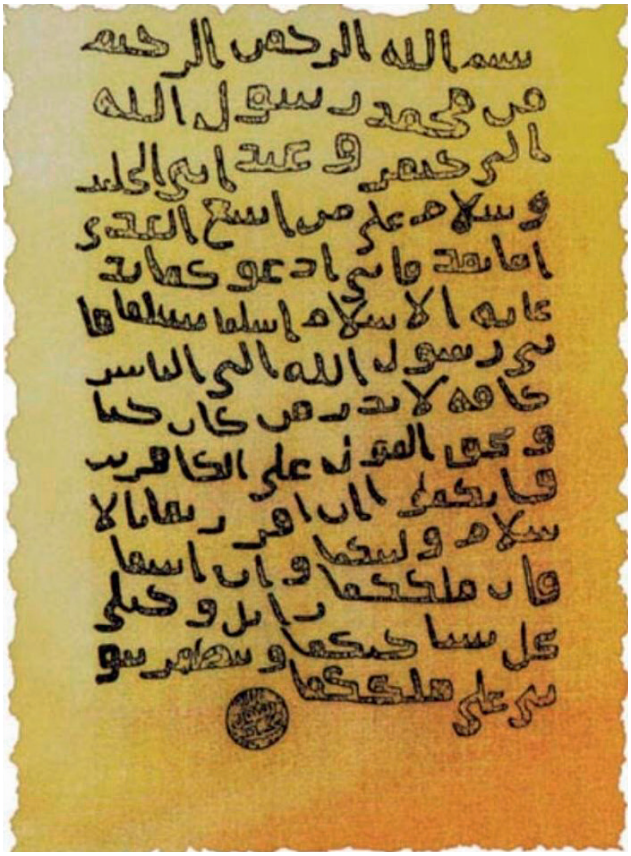
5.5.1 The Letter of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the Kings of Oman (Jaifar and 'Abd, Sons of Al-Julanda)

This letter constitutes the foundational document for Oman's political Islamic identity, highlighting the voluntary entry of Omanis into Islam driven by inherited political wisdom and foresight. Issued in the month of Dhu al-Qi'dah in the eighth year of the Hijra **(8 AH / 630 CE)**, this official document was directly addressed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the apex of executive political authority in Oman, represented by the brothers Jaifar and 'Abd, sons of Al-Julanda.The docu-

ment is characterized by eloquent brevity and absolute clarity, combining spiritual theological invitation with an explicit political affirmation of the global message ("to all mankind"). Furthermore, it addressed both monarchs in their official political capacities without overlooking their status, reflecting a mutual respect that established the principle of diplomatic parity and administrative independence that Oman subsequently maintained within the Islamic state (Al-Rahbi, 2023).

The discourse was distinguished by its synthesis of spiritual invitation and political delineation of the emerging state's features. The calligraphic script, historical phrasing, and placement of the Noble Seal of this primary foundational document can be examined in the preserved historical manuscript illustrated in (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Manuscript of the Letter from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the Kings of Oman, Jaifar and 'Abd, Sons of Al-Julanda (8 AH/ 630 CE(



Note. The figure illustrates the preserved original text of the Noble Prophetic Letter written in unpointed ancient Arabic script and bearing the Noble Prophetic Seal at the bottom of the manuscript. This document served as a constitutional declaration that guided Omani identity and sovereignty toward integration into the Islamic fold. Adapted from Historical Collections and Documents, National Records and Archives Authority, Sultanate of Oman.

5.5.2 Correspondence During the Ya'rubid and Busaidi Eras

This era features diplomatic letters from Omani Imams and Sultans to world leaders, including French monarchs (Louis XIV and Louis XVI), British sovereigns, Chinese emperors, and Presidents of the United States. A notable highlight is the historic exchange between Sayyid Said bin Sultan and U.S. President Andrew Jackson in 1833 upon signing the Treaty of Amity and Commerce (Al-Maamari, 2021).

A. The Position of the Sultanate of Oman During the Era of Ottoman Presence

Within the geopolitical history of the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, diplomatic correspondence between the Omani Empire and the Ottoman Empire holds exceptional significance. Preserved between the halls of the National Records and Archives Authority in the Sultanate of Oman and the Sublime Porte Archives in Istanbul, these documents disclose refined details regarding Oman's prestigious strategic and political standing during the era of Ottoman presence. Oman represented the maritime power guaranteeing regional security and trade, as well as an independent political entity that maintained diplomatic parity with the largest empires of the modern Islamic era.

The core research problem centers on deconstructing this archival diplomatic discourse to examine how it fosters national identity and anchors affective citizenship among Omanis in the age of digital globalization. This is analyzed through four primary dimensions:

- Analyzing manifestations of diplomatic parity and mutual recognition of sovereignty.
- Exploring strategic partnerships in safeguarding regional maritime security.
- Examining the central economic and commercial weight of Omani ports.
- Investigating the Omani philosophy of political balance and wisdom as inherited identity traits.

These economic documents demonstrate that Oman served as a vital lifeline driving the regional economy and acting as a prominent commercial intermediary between East and West. Omani ports-such as Muscat, Sohar, and Sur-operated as key hubs for re-exportation and securing essential commodities. Preserving this economic memory and making it accessible to society strengthens national belonging by linking modern development to the country's deep economic roots.

This endows society with cognitive confidence in its nation's capacity for contemporary economic leadership, grounded in documented achievements backed by conclusive archival evidence (Black, 2000).

The use of elevated titles and grand diplomatic formulas in letters addressed by Ottoman Sultans to Omani rulers constitutes explicit archival recognition of Oman's distinct political status. From a psycho-social perspective, this documented political equality leaves a profound impact on the structure of national identity among contemporary citizens. When individuals internalize that their homeland was never subordinate to dominant regional powers, but rather interacted with them with competence and parity, values of pride and self-resilience take root. Belonging transforms from a transient geographical connection into an attachment to a long history of sovereignty and political dignity that protects society from cultural dissolution.

Furthermore, these documents reveal military and security parity. Despite its vast land empire, the Ottoman Empire depended heavily on the striking power of the Omani fleet in open seas. Consequently, the correspondence reflects a relationship not of superior and subordinate, but of strategic allies sharing responsibility for protecting Islamic maritime passages. Written in refined diplomatic language and sealed with official royal seals, these letters exert a deep psychological effect: they reproduce Omani identity as sovereign and equal. Contemporary Omani citizens discern through these records that their ancestors led an institutionally mature state holding the diplomatic initiative and engaging global powers with dignity and mutual respect, thereby raising the ceiling of national ambition among youth and reinforcing proud, sovereign citizenship (Jimerson, 2009).

B. Early Omani-American Relations as an Archival Witness to Sovereignty and Identity Formation

The reign of Sayyid Said bin Sultan Al-Busaidi (1804–1856) represents the golden age of Omani diplomatic integration into the modern international system. Oman successfully established political and commercial bridges with the United States at an early juncture in modern history. The early decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a strategic shift in Omani governance, as Sayyid Said bin Sultan transferred his administrative center to Zanzibar in 1840 to consolidate control over maritime trade routes and expand Omani influence across East Africa and the northern Indian Ocean (Al-Hashmi, 2018).

Sayyid Said dispatched his special envoy, Hajji Ahmad bin Na'aman Al-Kaabi, aboard the famous Omani ship *Sultana* to New York. He became the first Arab diplomatic envoy to reach the United States, carrying official correspondence and gifts from Sayyid Said bin Sultan to activate the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Oman and the United States, leaving behind a wealth of records, documents, and memoirs detailing this relationship (Al-Maamari, 2021).

The scholarly value of these historical records intersects with the psycho-social dimensions of constructing contemporary citizenship through three core pillars:

- **Establishing Historical Sovereignty:** The official treaty and correspondence provide conclusive evidence that the Sultanate of Oman has consistently operated as an internationally recognized political entity capable of negotiating and executing major agreements with rising global powers, countering narratives that seek to reduce the region's geopolitical history (Jimerson, 2009).
- **Dismantling Isolation and Anchoring Openness:** Accessing the archive of the Sultana's voyage protects individuals from insularity, demonstrating that their national identity is dynamic and built on civilizational interaction with both East and West. This reinforces values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence within the collective subconscious of Omani society (Al-Siyabi, 2020).
- **Safeguarding National Memory for Generations:** The restoration of these treaties and letters by the National Records and Archives Authority, alongside their digital and visual presentation in national museums and exhibitions, equips younger generations with firm knowledge structures that spark national pride. This links them emotionally to their deep political roots in an era dominated by distorted digital information across unvetted social media platforms (Assmann, 2011).

5.6 OMANI MANUSCRIPTS: ANCHORING COGNITIVE AND CULTURAL SECURITY

Omani manuscripts represent the intellectual repository and heritage asset that preserved Omani thought throughout history, constituting a fundamental pillar in constructing national identity. The diversity of this manuscript heritage-spanning Islamic jurisprudence, political science, and applied sciences-was not merely abstract record-keeping; rather, it served as the vital lifeline sustaining the nation's mind and preserving its cognitive framework across centuries (Al-Rashdi, 2020).

This intrinsic value materializes in specific manuscript models that shaped Omani consciousness and anchored belonging. In encyclopedic jurisprudence and legislation, *Bayan al-Shar'* by Sheikh Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Kadmi and *Qamus al-Shari'ah* by Sheikh Ja'id bin Khamis Al-Kharusi stand out not only as foundational legal references, but as frameworks establishing an independent Omani methodology for societal governance based on tolerance and justice.

In history and political governance, manuscripts such as *Kashf al-Ghummah al-Jami' li-Akhbar al-Ummah* by Sirhan bin Said Al-Azkawi and *Tuhfat al-A'yan bi-Ba'd Sirat Ahl 'Oman* by Nur al-Din Al-Salimi serve as crucial documents defining Omani political thought and recording key historical junctures where state sovereignty and positive neutrality were forged.

In applied and maritime sciences, Omani maritime expertise shines in the navigational poems and manuscripts of the "Lion of the Seas" Ahmad bin Majid, such as *Kitab al-Fawa'id fi Usul 'Ilm al-Bahr wa al-Qawa'id*, as well as Captain Nasir bin Ali Al-Khadoori's manuscript *Ma'dan al-Asrar fi 'Ilm al-Bihar*. These texts provide empirical proof of Omani leadership in navigation and seamanship across the Indian Ocean (Al-Salimi, 2021).

5.6.1 Dimensions of Cognitive and Cultural Security: Refuting "Civilizational Inferiority"

The functional dimension of these manuscripts transcends traditional archival storage to achieve comprehensive "cognitive and cultural security." When contemporary researchers and citizens engage with these texts authored by Omani scholars across complex fields, they realize that Omani civilization was never merely a transient military or commercial power, but rather a "knowledge-producing nation" possessing distinct legal and philosophical schools characterized by moderation and intellectual tolerance (Al-Harthi, 2018).

This preserved heritage acts as a protective shield safeguarding contemporary Omani society against:

- **Intellectual Alienation:** Shielding against cross-border cultural hegemony.
- **Civilizational Inferiority:** Countering feelings of inadequacy toward the Other.
- **Historical Disconnection:** Providing a solid foundation to derive solutions for contemporary challenges rooted in authentic Omani values (Derrida, 1996).

5.6.2 Manuscripts as Material Proof of Geopolitical Parity

Omani manuscripts and historical records supply concrete material evidence refuting the assumption that Omani national identity is a recent product or a construct of modern state-building. On the contrary, documentary evidence confirms that this identity was structurally founded on long-standing geopolitical parity, maritime strength, and political sovereignty in the face of major global and colonial powers throughout the ages.

The core value of these documents lies in bolstering national consciousness by dismantling the psychological gap between a citizen's personal history and their state's official history. When Omanis recall documented evidence demonstrating how global superpowers engaged with Oman as an equal empire and strategic partner in securing trade routes and maintaining balance across the Indian Ocean, it positively reinforces their psychological and cultural security.

The cumulative awareness of this historical equality produces what can be termed "sovereign citizenship and affective pride"-a state wherein citizens acquire an intellectual resilience that enables them to navigate globalizing trends and cultural homogenization with confidence and conscious engagement, free from assimilation or alienation.

6. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that historical documents, manuscripts, and written materials in the Sultanate of Oman represent the "genetic baseline of Omani national identity." These materials transcend their classical role as mere witnesses to the past, evolving into dynamic instruments for engineering social peace, cultivating sovereign consciousness, and deepening the citizen's emotional bond to their state and land across centuries.

The researcher posits that Oman's physical documentary assets-encompassing rock carvings, maps, diplomatic correspondence, and manuscripts-serve as "cultural and national insurance policies for Omani sovereignty." In today's world, where identities are erased and history is virtually reshaped, Omanis possess a distinct strategic advantage: definitive, irrefutable material evidence proving their civilizational depth and intellectual and political independence.

Furthermore, the researcher asserts that the success of these documents in generating and sustaining national belonging hinges on transitioning them from "physical preservation and restoration" to "smart knowledge dissemination and communication." It is no longer sufficient for a nation to merely take pride in housing a letter from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) or a nineteenth-century treaty with Washington behind glass display cases. Rather, these texts, seals, and maps must be transformed into "visual icons" deployed across contemporary arts, architectural design, interactive educational curricula, and the official and personal visual identity of citizens.

Finally, the researcher concludes that integrating these venerable documentary materials into digitization and artificial intelligence initiatives-such as constructing an interactive digital map atlas or rendering international correspondence through virtual museum technologies-is the most effective avenue for connecting future cyber generations to their heritage. This approach ensures that Omani belonging remains anchored in solid cognitive and historical certainty, resilient against the currents of cultural globalization.

Based on the topics and frameworks examined across the sections of this study, it becomes clearly evident that the archival entity in the contemporary world has transcended its traditional function of mere bureaucratic and physical preservation of official records and documents. It has evolved into a "sovereign and emotional infrastructure" that actively contributes to engineering collective consciousness, formulating national narratives, and safeguarding the cultural security of societies. This study has demonstrated that archival materials of all types-written, visual, oral, and cartographic-do not merely represent records of the past; rather, they constitute a dynamic strategic instrument for anchoring affective citizenship and constructing bridges of communication among the individual, society, and the state.

Through the experience of the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), the Sultanate of Oman has presented an empirical model and a pioneering research laboratory that underscores the success of the Arab archival institution in integrating physical and intangible documentary heritage into a unifying national project. The Sultanate has successfully fused deeply rooted historical evidence-such as Bronze Age rock carvings, global maps, sovereign diplomat-

ic correspondence, and scientific manuscripts-within a balanced identity matrix that combines authenticity with civilizational openness. Furthermore, the Omani experience proves that incorporating private and family archives into the broader national memory reduces the psychological barrier between the citizen and state institutions, converting citizenship from a dry legal framework into a participatory emotional encounter.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the scientific conclusions reached by this study, a set of strategic and practical recommendations is proposed for archival, cultural, and educational institutions to maximize the utility of archives as instruments for identity construction and renewed belonging:

First: Strategic and Sovereign Recommendations (Cultural Security)

Modernizing Archival Access Policies: Launch field campaigns and community workshops across governorates and wilayats to restore and archive citizens' private and family documents, thereby deepening participatory citizenship.

Adopting Archival Pedagogy: Establish structured coordination between the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) and educational authorities to organically integrate primary archival materials, historical maps, and international diplomatic correspondence into school curricula, moving away from static historical texts.

Safeguarding Architectural and Visual Sovereignty: Enact legislation and design guidelines that draw inspiration from the environmental and architectural heritage preserved in historical archives-such as **Aflaj** systems and traditional mud-brick structures-and apply them to future smart and sustainable urban developments, ensuring psycho-spatial continuity for citizens.

Second: Technical and Communicative Recommendations (Digital Era)

Re-engineering Digital Archival Content: Convert long hours of oral history interviews and manuscripts into concise, interactive visual formats tailored to the cognitive engagement patterns of modern digital generations, distributing them across social media platforms.

Leveraging Fourth Industrial Revolution Technologies: Expand the utilization of generative artificial intelligence, natural language processing (NLP), and 3D digital twins to establish permanent virtual museums and exhibitions, allowing young users to enter and emotionally interact with historical events and national figures.

Opening Archives to Creative Industries: Grant access to visual and oral archival assets-subject to legal frameworks and intellectual property rights-to filmmakers, dramatists, and developers of historical and educational video games to re-produce national memory in engaging, world-class formats.

Third: Research Recommendations (Future Study Horizons)

Expanding Studies on Memory and Affective Citizenship: Direct researchers and graduate students toward interdisciplinary studies combining archival science, social psychology, and digital sociology to measure the psychological impact of digital archival platforms on youth consciousness.

Documenting Marginalized Heritage and Oral Memory: Intensify institutional efforts to document local historical languages, traditional performing arts, and heritage practices vulnerable to rapid urbanization, recognizing them as authentic streams that enrich the collective identity and protect it from standardization.

REFERENCES

Al-Busaidi, N. A. (2021). *Al-huwiyyah al-'umraniyyah al-'omaniyyah bayna al-asalah wa-al-tahdeeth: Dirasah watha'iqiyyah wa-tarikhiyyah* [Omani architectural identity between authenticity and modernization: A documentary and historical study]. Dar Al-Lban for Publishing and Distribution.

Al-Busaidi, N. A. (2022). *'Oman fi al-kharai't al-tarikhiyyah al-'alamiyyah: Dirasah kartughrafiyyah wa-tarikhiyyah* [Oman in global historical maps: A cartographic and historical study]. Dar Al-Lban for Publishing and Distribution.

Al-Dhawayani, H. M. (2019, October). *Istiratijiyyat Hay'at al-Watha'iq wa-al-Mahfuzat al-Wataniyyah bi-Sultanat 'Oman fi hifz al-dhakirah al-wataniyyah wa-idarat al-watha'iq al-hayyah* [The strategy of the National Records and Archives Authority in the Sultanate of Oman in preserving national memory and managing active records] [Conference presentation]. International Conference on Archives, Muscat, Oman.

Al-Gheilani, H. H. (2023a). *Al-handasah al-taqlidiyyah wa-sawun al-'imarah al-athariyyah fi Sultanat 'Oman bina'an 'ala al-shawahid al-tarikhiyyah* [Traditional engineering and the preservation of archaeological architecture in the Sultanate of Oman based on historical evidence]. Kanz Al-Ma'rifah Publishing.

Al-Gheilani, H. H. (2023b). *Manhajiyyat tawthiq al-tarikh al-shafawi fi Sultanat 'Oman: Tahaddiyat wa-afaq* [Methodology of documenting oral history in the Sultanate of Oman: Challenges and prospects]. Kanz Al-Ma'rifah Publishing.

Al-Harthi, M. M. (2018). *Al-makhtutat al-'omaniyyah ka-masdar li-siyaghat al-fikr al-thaqafi wa-al-watani* [Omani manuscripts as a source for shaping cultural and national thought]. Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Publications.

Al-Hashmi, S. M. (2018). *Al-Imbraturiyyah al-'Omaniyyah: Al-imtitad al-jughrafi wa-al-tawasul al-hadari* [The Omani Empire: Geographical expansion and civilizational communication]. Dar Al-Jarir for Publishing and Distribution.

Al-Jahwari, N. S. (2019). Al-nuqush wa-al-rusum al-sakhriyyah fi 'Oman wa-dawruha fi tawthiq al-hadarat al-qadimah [Rock inscriptions and carvings in Oman and their role in documenting ancient civilizations]. *Journal of Omani Studies, 20*, 45–72.

Al-Kharusi, H. S. (2022). Athar al-arshifat al-khassah wa-al-'a'iliyyah fi ta'zeez al-dhakirah al-wataniyyah: Tajribat Sultanat 'Oman namudhajan [The impact of private and family archives in reinforcing national memory: The experience of the Sultanate of Oman as a model]. *The Arab Journal of Informatics and Documents, 3*(5), 45–68.

Al-Kharusi, S. M. (2020). *Tarikh 'Oman al-bahri wa-ta'thiruhu fi al-tamasuk al-thaqafi wa-al-ijtima'i 'abra al-'usur* [Oman's maritime history and its impact on cultural and social cohesion through the ages]. Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Publications.

Al-Maamari, A. S. (2021). *Al-'alaqat al-diblumasiyyah al-'omaniyyah al-duwaliyyah fi al-qarn al-tasi' 'ashar min khilal al-watha'iq al-arshifiyyah* [Omani international diplomatic relations in the nineteenth century through archival documents]. National Records and Archives Authority.

Al-Maawali, B. K., & Al-Yaqoobi, S. R. (2021). Istiratijiyyat jam' wa-tawthiq al-tarikh al-shafawi fi Sultanat 'Oman: Dirasah tahleeliyyah li-juhud Hay'at al-Watha'iq wa-al-Mahfuzat al-Wataniyyah [Strategies for collecting and documenting oral history in the Sultanate of Oman: An analytical study of the efforts of the National Records and Archives Authority]. *Rissalat Al-Maktaba, 56*(1), 73–98.

Al-Rashdi, S. S. (2020). Mawsūʻāt al-fiqh al-ʻUmānīyah wa-atharuhā fī ṣawn al-huwīyah al-fikrīyah lil-mujtamaʻ [Omani jurisprudence encyclopedias and their impact on safeguarding the intellectual identity of society]. *The Arab Journal of Informatics and Documents, 2*(4), 115–138.

Al-Siyabi, K. R. (2020). Al-tanawwu' al-thaqafi fi 'Oman wa-insiharuhu fi al-huwiyyah al-wataniyyah: Qira'ah fi al-watha'iq wa-al-makhtutat al-tarikhiyyah [Cultural diversity in Oman and its fusion into national identity: A reading in historical documents and manuscripts]. *Journal of Omani Studies, 21*, 89–112.

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev. ed.). Verso.

Assmann, J. (2011). *Cultural memory and early civilization: Writing, remembrance, and political imagination*. Cambridge University Press.

Bantin, P. R. (Ed.). (2016). *Building trustworthy digital repositories: Theory and practice*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Barthes, R. (1981). *Camera lucida: Reflections on photography* (R. Howard, Trans.). Hill and Wang.

Black, J. (2000). *Maps and history: Constructing images of the past*. Yale University Press.

Cook, T. (2013). Evidence, memory, identity, and community: Four shifting archival paradigms. *Archival Science, 13*(2–3), 95–120. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-012-9180-7 (1. 10.2026).

Cox, R. J. (2020). *The archivist's manifesto: Essays on the future of memory institutions*. Library Juice Press.

Derrida, J. (1996). *Archive fever: A Freudian impression* (E. Prenowitz, Trans.). University of Chicago Press.

Featherstone, M. (2006). Archive. *Theory, Culture & Society, 23*(2–3), 591–596. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276406023002106 (1. 10. 2026).

Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language* (A. M. Sheridan Smith, Trans.). Pantheon Books.

Gilliland, A. J. (2014). *Conceptualizing 21st-century archives*. Society of American Archivists.

Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On collective memory* (L. A. Coser, Trans.). University of Chicago Press.

Jimerson, R. C. (2009). *Archives power: Memory, accountability, and social justice*. Society of American Archivists.

Ketelaar, E. (2008). Archives as spaces of memory. *Journal of the Society of Archivists, 29*(1), 9–27. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/00379810802499678 (1. 10. 2026).

Misztal, B. A. (2003). *Theories of social remembering*. Open University Press.

National Records and Archives Authority. (2024). *Al-ma'arid al-watha'iqiyyah wa-dawruha fi ta'zeez al-wa'i al-watani* [Documentary exhibitions and their role in enhancing national awareness].

Schwartz, J. M. (2007). Archives as spaces of resistance: Challenging the global cultural hegemony. *Archival Science, 7*(4), 321–338.

Schwartz, J. M., & Cook, T. (2002). Archives, records, and power: The making of modern memory. *Archival Science, 2*(1–2), 1–19. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435628 (1. 10. 2026).

Seemiller, C., & Grace, M. (2017). Generation Z: Changes on the horizon for higher education. *Online Submission, 19*(3), 21–26.

Vansina, J. (1985). *Oral tradition as history*. University of Wisconsin Press.

Xie, S. (2019). Digital preservation and cultural identity in the globalized era. *Journal of Documentation, 75*(2), 412–430.

Yakel, E. (2003). Archival representation. *Archival Science, 3*(1), 1–25. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02442290 (1. 10. 2026).

SUMMARY

This study examines the evolving philosophical, social, and psychological functions of national archives in the contemporary world, transitioning them from traditional administrative storage centers into strategic infrastructures for identity construction and civic belonging. The core research problem addresses the dual pressure facing memory institutions: a communicative disconnect with young digital generations and the risk of local identity dissolution under cultural globalization.

Utilizing a descriptive-analytical framework alongside an empirical case study of the Sultanate of Oman, the research deconstructs how physical, oral, and cartographic records actively formulate collective consciousness. The Omani experience, spearheaded by the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), provides an instructive model. Through projects like the National Private Documents Campaign, the Oral History Initiative, and documentary exhibitions, Oman has effectively integrated local cultural streams-including Swahili, Mehri, Jibbali, Lawati, and Baloch traditions-into a cohesive national narrative.

The paper analyzes specific historical artifacts demonstrating Oman's long-standing sovereignty and geopolitical parity. Bronze Age rock carvings such as "Hasat Bin Salt" and modified South Arabian Musnad cave inscriptions in Dhofar establish early social organization and linguistic independence. Classical maps by Ptolemy and medieval world maps by Al-Sharif Al-Idrisi confirm early international recognition of Omani maritime borders and strategic ports. Diplomatic

records, including the 7th-century letter from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the Kings of Oman and 19th-century treaties with the United States and European powers, reinforce a sovereign identity built on diplomatic equality and open maritime trade.

Furthermore, the study highlights how jurisprudence, historical, and maritime manuscripts (such as those by Ahmad bin Majid) protect contemporary citizens from cultural alienation and feelings of civilizational inferiority. Incorporating citizens' private records into the state archive dissolves the barrier between individual and official histories, transforming citizenship into a participatory, emotional bond.

The study concludes that the future efficacy of national archives depends on transitioning from physical containment to smart, interactive dissemination. Leveraging Fourth Industrial Revolution tools-such as artificial intelligence, natural language processing, 3D digital twins, and virtual reality-is essential to re-engineer archival assets into visual icons, virtual museum displays, and educational media. This strategic evolution ensures that national identity remains resilient, vibrant, and deeply rooted among future digital generations.

Typlogoy: 1.01 Original scientific research