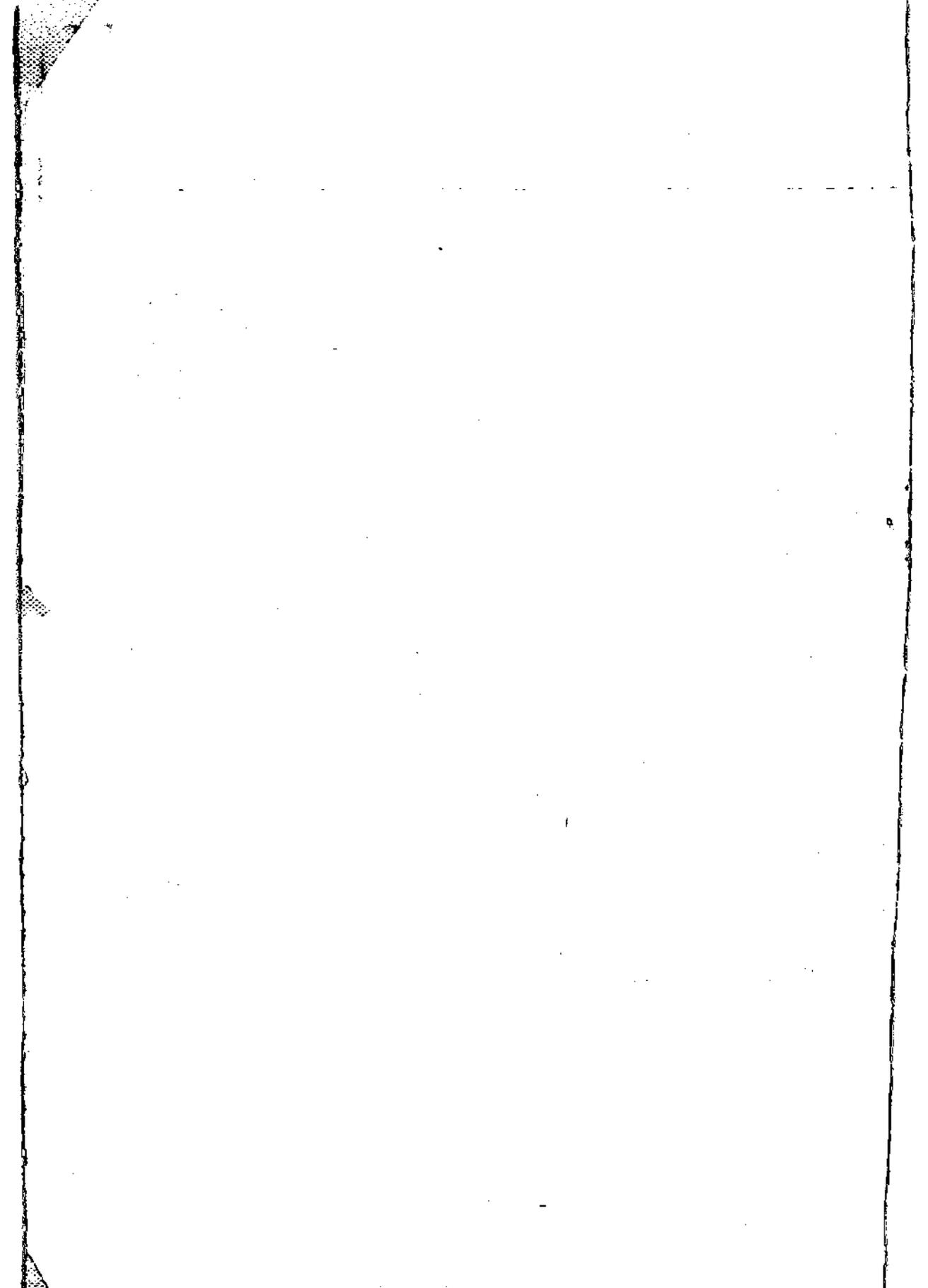




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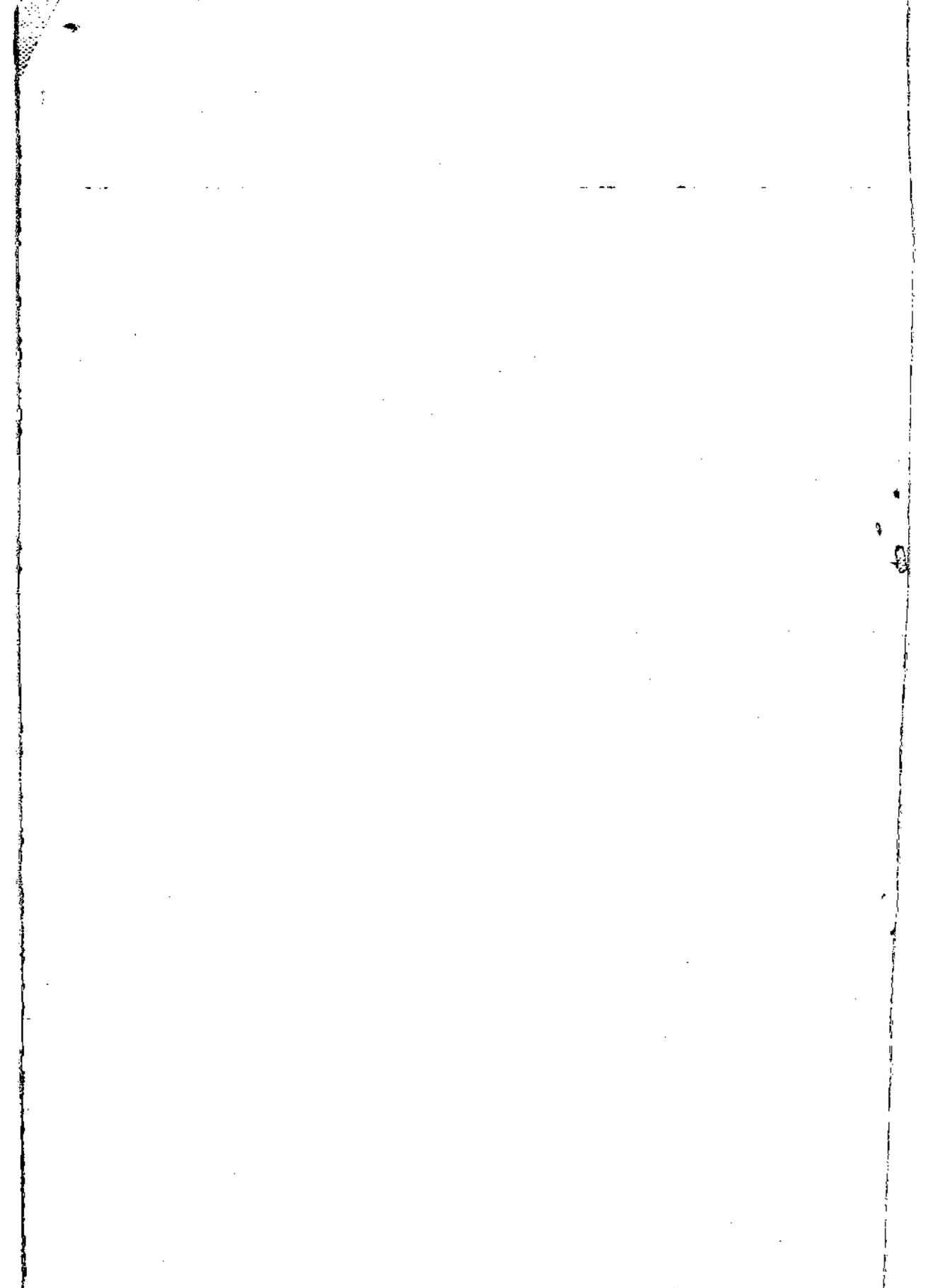
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THE ROLE OF EXPATRIATES IN THE WORK FORCE OF THE SULTANATE OF OMAN: A Geographical View

by

Dr. Hassan Sayed Hassan
Assistant Professor of Geography
Ain-Shams University

Introduction:

In its modern history, Oman has known all kinds of external migrations. There have been emigrants, returnees and immigrants⁽¹⁾. The research does not deal with such kinds of settling migrations, but it deals with the most recent trends in migration, i.e., those expatriates who come to Oman for work. It focuses on foreign labour in the Sultanate of Oman in 1992.

In this research, an attempt is made to classify population according to work status in order to know the size of the national work force compared to expatriate labour, then to study the number of expatriates who came to Oman in 1992 after classifying them according to nationality, work sector (government - private), the economic activity, the major occupational group, and the geographic distribution. A study is made to look also into the accompanying economic and social problems, and to attempt to find suitable solutions in light of the "Omanization" principle which has become a national slogan.

It is not strange that this study relies on few Arabic and foreign references, on the one hand, while it increasingly depends, on the other, on statistical sources, personal observations, verbal questions as well as questionnaires⁽²⁾. This is due to the fact that the subject requires some statistical and field treatments that aim at measuring the public opinion on the role of expatriates in developing the country and the negative effects of this labour in the Sultanate of Oman.

Objectives: Population Classified According to Work Status:

Since the mid-1970s, millions of expatriates have come to work in the Arabian Gulf oil states. Their arrival was linked to the discovery of oil and the use of its revenues in development plans in these states. The number of those expatriates was estimated at 3,921,000 in 1990 against a national work force that did not exceed 2,649,000⁽³⁾. This means that the expatriate workers represented 59.7% of the total number of the work force in the Arab Gulf states. They were of different nationalities: Asians (48.7%), Arabs, Europeans and others (11.0%)⁽⁴⁾. The Arab Gulf states were affected by the different cultures of the expatriates, on the one hand, and became geographically heterogeneous, on the other.

Regarding the Sultanate of Oman one of the Arab Gulf states, one sees it has become a growing market for expatriates. It receives them as it aims at achieving quick growth and development in order to keep up with its Gulf neighbours, especially as it has become one of the "rich" Arab countries⁽⁵⁾ since the early 1980s. (On a per capita basis, the proven oil reserves are nearly 2,302 barrels for every inhabitant in 1992)⁽⁶⁾.

The objective of the research is to study the expatriate labour. To do this, one should study the total work force in the Sultanate in order to compare the size of the national work force with that of the expatriates and the percentage of the economically-active ones in order to know the role and contributions of each group in the economy of the country.

TABLE 1. Distribution of Population (10 years old and above) by Work Status in 1993 and Aggregate Population in 1993

Work Status	Non-Omani		Omani		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Economically Active					
Workers	454728	90.74	246601	30.10	701323
Out. of Work	552	0.11	21220	2.59	21771
Total	455280	90.85	267821	32.69	723094
Economically Non-Active					
Students	13526	2.70	239310	29.21	252840
Housewives	32119	6.41	265609	32.42	297731
Others	201	0.04	46534	5.68	46735
Total	45846	9.15	551453	67.31	597306
Pop. (10 yrs. old and/or Above)	501126	100.00	819274	100.00	1320400
Total pop. in the end of the year 1993	537060		1480531		2017591

Source:

Percentages : Sultanate of Oman - Development Council - General Secretariat, Statistical Year Book 1992, Issue No. 21, Muscat, July 1993, pp. 47-55.

Figures: a) Total population (Omanis and non-Omanis) : Development Council - Technical Secretariat, "first results of the general census of population, houses and establishments", Muscat, December 1993, Table I (Arabic). (These are the results of the first ever census to be done in the Sultanate of Oman.)

b) All figures except those in (a) are calculated by the researcher, depending on the percentages.

c) The total number of economically active non-Omanis includes the expatriates in the government sector (26726), the private sector (421132), the Royal Court (6630), and the general corporations (785).

(Statistical Year Book 1992, op. cit., pp. 120-132).

analyzing the data of the previous table, the following is concluded:

The population consists of two groups : Omanis, who represent three quarters of the population and include 62% of the total manpower (10 years and above), and expatriates (non-Omanis), who constitute one quarter of the population and at the same time include not more than 38% of the total manpower (10 years and above).

Expatriates constitute about 63% of the total number of the economically-active people in the Sultanate, while the percentage of the economically-active Omanis does not exceed 37% of the total population (Omanis and non-Omanis).

The number of economically-active nationals still to constitute 18.1% of the total Omani population. In the meantime, one can conclude that the economically-active non-Omanis represent 84.8% of the total number of immigrants. This clear increase in the percentage of expatriate workers is due, in the first place, to the fact that the majority of those workers are Asians whose wages and salaries are very low to the extent that they cannot bring their families with them. Also, labour laws allow the expatriates to bring his family only under certain circumstances that are not easy to be fulfilled.

In general, the manpower (10 years and above) can be classified as economically-active and economically-non-active. Omanis constitute about 20.3% and 41.7% respectively; non-Omanis represent 34.5% and 3.5% of these groups.

Among the economically-active group, about 54.8% of the total manpower (10 years and above) really work, i.e., 35.8% of the whole population (nationals and expatriates).

The economically-non-active group includes housewives, students and others. The housewives represent 49.8% (44.5% Omanis and 4.3% expatriates). The percentage of students against the total number of the economically-non-active group reached 42.3%. This indicates that housewives and students constitute more than 92.1% of the total number of non-active group. This percentage led to a decline in the size of other groups. It is natural to find a rise in the percentage of females in the economically-non-active group due to the modest role of the Omani woman in work. Housewives alone constitute half the economically-non-active group. This is the nature of the developing Eastern societies to which the Omani society belongs.

Appendix: Classification of the Labour Force According to the Work Sector and Nationality:

As other Gulf societies, Omani society is demographically characterized by having a variety of nationalities. So, when one tries to study the structure of the labour force, one should classify workers according to their nationalities, especially as this issue has economic, social and cultural effects on the national population. These effects will be mentioned later.

Because of the lack of complete data on the labour force classified according to sex in both government (public) and private sectors, we will concentrate on classifying the labour force according to work sector with some attention to nationality. This necessitates classifying the labour force into Omanis and non-Omanis, then classifying the latter into Arabs and non-Arabs

in order to know the numbers and nationalities of workers in each sector, on the one hand the total number of employees and the contribution of each nationality in the labour force of the country, on the other, without ignoring mentioning sex when information becomes available.

It seems a bit difficult to study the classification of labour (as mentioned before) without looking into the full population structure in the country. So, a comparison between the data of Table 1 and 2 is needed.

TABLE 2. Omani and Non-Omani Labour According to Employment Sector, 19

Nationality	Employment Sector		Private Sector	Civil Service	Total	%
Omanis			441929	50094	492023	57
Non-Omani Labour (Expatriates)	Arabs		8441	12212	20653	2
	Others		412691	14514	427205	48
Total			863061	76820	939881*	100

Source: This table was prepared by the researcher relying on the detailed figures of Table 1.

The number of Omanis working in the private sector equals the number of Omanis in government sector, plus the number of expatriates in both sectors subtracted from the total number of workers in government and private sectors.

- * The total number of workers in both sectors in this table does not conform with the number of economically active workers mentioned in Table 1, because this table's figures do not include the number of workers in general corporations and the Royal Court which amount to 7415, due to the fact that detailed data on their nationalities are unavailable.

After studying the data of Table 1 & Table 2 and comparing them, one can conclude the following:

1. Expatriates:
 - a) Expatriates constitute 48.8% and 34.8% of the labour force in both private and public sectors respectively. The importance of expatriates in the private sector stems from its size, which absorbs 91.8% of all workers in the country, or eight times the number of workers in the public sector (Figure 1.)

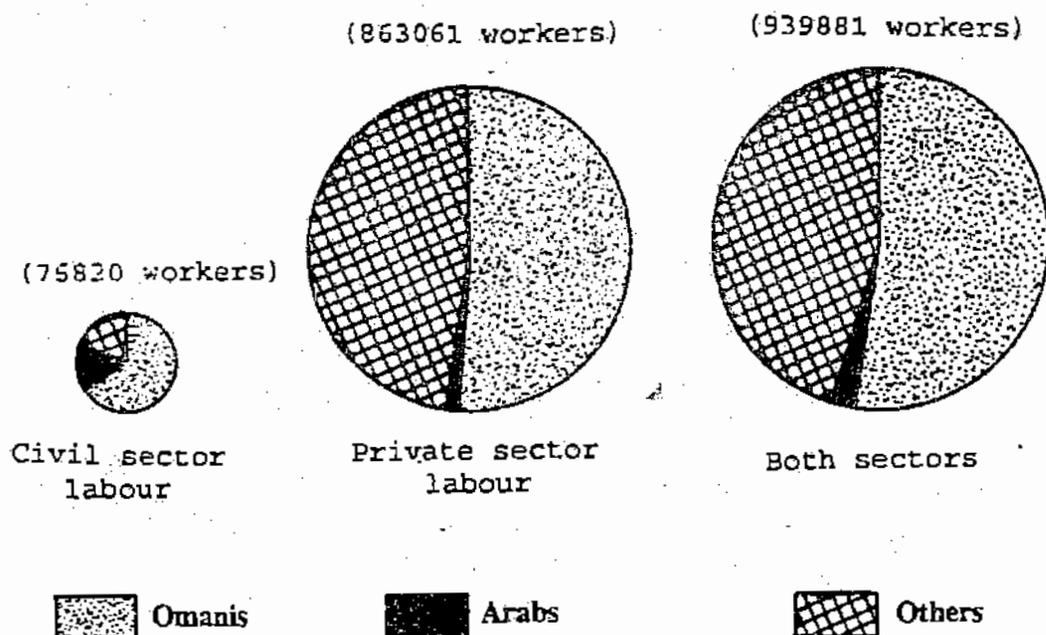


Figure 1. Omani and Non-Omani Labour in the Sultanate by Employment Sector, 1992.

Diagrammed by the researcher

-) Expatriates are concentrated in the private sector, which absorbs 94% of them, while the public sector takes only 6%. This is due to the following reasons:
 - Big contracting companies bring with them their workers. They stay in the country during the project implementation period. Once the project is implemented they leave ⁽⁷⁾. It is worth mentioning that the country focused on many infrastructure projects in its development plans.
 - Employers favour expatriates, especially South East Asians, because they are cheap and cause no trouble, on the one hand, and do their jobs at any time, on the other ⁽⁸⁾.
-) The Arab Gulf states - Oman is one of them - desire to diversify the sources of expatriate manpower so that they can avoid being dependent on any nationality in this field, besides the fact that the lack of confidence in the present Arab situations makes them prefer Asian labour ⁽⁹⁾.

- d) The contribution of expatriate Arab labour in the total work force in the Sultanate (private and public sectors) reached about 2.2%, despite the fact that this percentage did not exceed 0.96% of the total population in 1992. In general, three fifths of those Arab expatriates work in the government sector, unlike other workers, whose majority work in the private sector.⁽¹⁰⁾
- e) The percentage of non-Arab expatriates is increasing as it reached 45.5% of the total work force in the country. So, they constituted 19.9% of the estimated population in 1992. Nine tenths of those expatriates work in the private sector due to the modest potentials of such sector, which suits the low wages of the class of expatriate workers who mostly come from South and South East Asia. The reason for such a distribution of expatriate labour is that work in the government sector often, but not always, requires knowledge of the Arabic language, a condition which only Omanis and Arab expatriates can meet.

As the Arabic language encouraged an increase in the percentage of Arab expatriates, it also led to an increase in the percentage of Omani employment in the public sector. They now occupy 65.2% of government jobs. It is worth mentioning that knowledge of Arabic was not the main reason. There were other factors, such as the fact that a government employment enhances the social and economic status due to its high salary compared to the private sector as well as the Omanization drive which is being applied at all levels.

2. National Labour:

Although the national population represents three quarters of the total population of the Sultanate, their contribution to the country's total work force does not exceed 37%. This is due to a number of reasons, the most important of which are the following:

- a) So far, national scientific, technical and specialized cadres that are vital to meet the needs of the employment market in the country have not yet been prepared as a result of the advancement of the development processes and the inability of the national labour force - with respect to quality, not quantity - to keep pace with the market. As for simple jobs like cleaning and services, only expatriates, especially those from South and South East Asia, can be used because they are cheap, and such jobs require great efforts.
- b) Omanis refuse to work in private sector despite its increasing role and size, because they meet unfair competition from trained and experienced expatriates who receive minimal wages and work more hours compared with the government sector.⁽¹¹⁾
- c) As for female employment, working Omani women (10 years and above) form only about 4% of the whole work force in 1992⁽¹²⁾. The percentage of working Omani females has increased in the government sector, where it reached 8% of the total number of government employees in 1983⁽¹³⁾. This percentage increased again to 16% in 1992⁽¹⁴⁾. However, it still constitutes a very low percentage because women form about 49.02% of the total Omani population⁽¹⁵⁾.

TABLE 3. Expatriate Labour in the Sultanate According to Labour Sectors and Their Nationalities, 1980-1992

Nationality Years	Government Sector*			Expatriate Labour in Civil Sector	Private Sector**			Expatriate Labour in Private Sector	Expatriate Labour in Civil and Private Sectors
	Omanis	Arabs	Asians Others		Arabs	Asians	Others		
1980	21625	6827	6079 116	13022	2332	122776	7510	132618	145640
1981	26219	7905	7345 161	15411	2538	156470	4926	163934	179345
1982	27249	8851	7835 152	16838	2727	178570	5524	186821	203659
1983	30427	8437	9047 165	17649	3179	226427	6040	235645	283294
1984	32511	10989	9103 478	19670	3394	259037	6979	269410	304803
1985	33772	10857	9611 722	21190	3342	273677	7314	284333	305523
1986	34412	11013	9156 861	21030	3483	257735	6327	267545	288575
1987	37261	11774	10172 1216	23162	2984	209753	3651	216388	239550
1988	39500	11620	10251 1692	23573	3987	240762	4121	248870	272443
1989	41385	11134	10082 2140	23356	4138	250398	3824	258360	281716
1990	44024	11138	9417 3541	24096	4833	267633	3422	275888	299984
1991	47200	11729	9708 3856	25293	6160	341237	4209	351606	376899
1992	50094	12212	10546 3968	26726	8441	407044	5647	421132	447858

Source: Sultanate of Oman - Development Council - General Secretariat, Statistical Year Books, Issues : 9-21, of 1980 - 1992 (different pages).

* Figures of the total number of expatriates working in the government sector do not include workers in public corporation and the Royal Court.

** Detailed figures on the size of the national labour force in the private sector are not available.

There is no doubt that the percentage of women in the labour force is a direct result of the fact that Oman has paid attention to education for only 25 years ⁽¹⁶⁾, besides the traditional nature of the society and its past view of the working woman.

Now, it is clear that employment in the Sultanate of Oman is characterized by the following:

- Dependence on the expatriate work force, a matter which is justified;
- The modest role of the Omani woman in the national work force;
- A rise in the total amount of expatriate salaries, which constitutes a partial drain of the country's income (detailed study of this issue can be found in a latter part of the research).

It is worth mentioning here that dependence on expatriates is the main characteristic of the labour force. All other characteristics are secondary and result from it, especially as expatriates formed about half the country's work force, or slightly less than the national force, in 1992. (See Table 3).

It seems that the previously mentioned characteristics have their justification. It also seems that determining the nationalities of expatriates, their economic activities, fields of work, the problems they face and ways to overcome them, would explain the characteristics of the work force and put forward the best solutions to redress this imbalance (if we are allowed to use this expression).

From the detailed data and figures in the following table, which deals with expatriates in both the private and public sectors all over the country, we can study the rates of growth in the size of this employment according to their nationalities.

From Table 3 and Figure 2, the following facts concerning the classification of the work force according to origin in both the public and private sectors, were collected:

- a) The number of expatriates who came to work in the country in both the public and private sectors in 1992 had become three times more than that of 1980. The number of those expatriates fell in the period 1986-90 for reasons related to the country's plans to curb public expenditure as a result of the fall of oil prices in world markets. (Figure 2).
- b) Nationals constituted the majority of the work force in the public sector. Their annual percentage during the period 1980-1992 ranged between 61.5% and 65.5% of the whole employment in this sector.
- c) The percentage of Arab expatriates in the public (government) sector ranged from approximately 46% to 53% of the total number of expatriates in this sector during the years from 1980 to 1992. At the same time, the average percentage of Arab expatriates in the private sector reached about 2% yearly during the same period.
- d) The percentage of Asian expatriates who came to work in the government sector varied during the period 1980-92, as it ranged between the maximum of 17.5% in

1980 and the minimum of 12.3% in 1988. As for the private sector, their year percentage ranged between 92.5% and 97% of the total number of expatriates this sector during the same period.

- e) Expatriates from other world continents came last with respect to the size of employment in the government, despite an increase in their percentage from about 0.3 percent in 1980 to 5.2 percent in 1992.

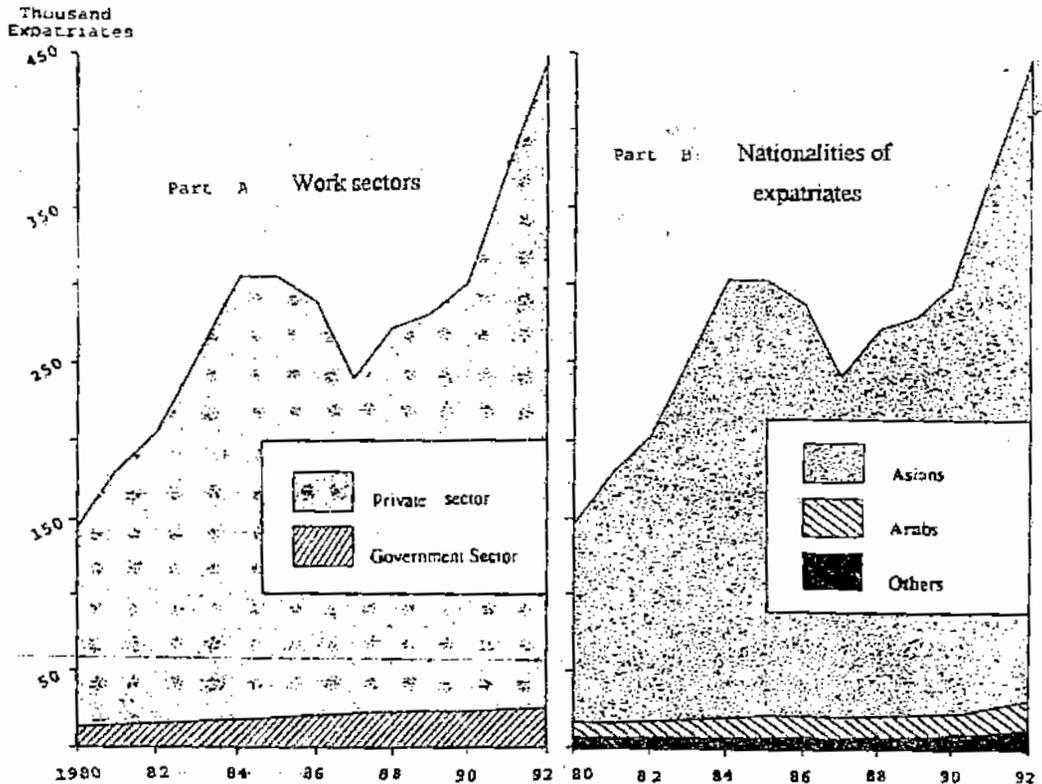


Figure 2. Cumulative Net Expatriates in the Sultanate by Employment Sector and Nationality 1980-92

Diagrammed by the researcher

Having said so, we conclude the following:

- Arab expatriates in the government sector topped the list when compared with other expatriates. This is due to the following two reasons:
 - I Employment in the government sector requires knowledge of the Arabic language

II Paying attention to and expansion of education necessitated making use of trained occupational labour (teachers) who can teach in Arabic.

- Asian expatriates from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Philippines (South East Asia) topped the list, in the private sector, because they are cheap and obedient and able to bear and perform hard or modest jobs without any complaints.
- Expatriates from continents other than Asia, who come to work in the public sector, have increased in number. This indicates an openness to the world in order to benefit from their experience in the various fields which are difficult to master by Arab expatriates.

As Tables 2 and 3 do not clearly show the rates of growth in the percentage of expatriates, the researcher opted to choose some years during the period 1980-1992 for comparison with the aim of clarifying the rates of growth in the total employment in the government sector alone, according to the nationalities as mentioned in the previous table. The researcher focused on the public sector because of the lack of data concerning national labour in the private sector.

TABLE 4. Rates of the Development of Omani and Non-Omani Civil Service Employees for Selected Periods

Nationality Years	Omanis %	Non-Omanis			Total %
		Arabs %	Asians %	Others %	
80-85	56.2	59.0	58.1	522.4	58.6
85-88	16.9	7.0	6.8	134.3	14.8
88-92	26.8	5.1	2.8	135.5	21.8
80-92	131.6	78.9	73.5	3320.7	121.7

Source: Calculated by the researcher according to data in Table 3. The absolute figures were converted into percentages and arranged into periods.

On studying the previous tables (3 and 4) the following is concluded:

- a) Although the rate of growth in the total work force (nationals and expatriates) in the government sector is continuously increasing, it fell in the years 1986, 1987 and 1988 because of the collapse of oil prices in world markets at the beginning of 1986. This led to the cancellation or postponement of many ambitious development projects which were included in the third five-year development plan (1986-1990). The exchange rate of Omani Rial fell against other currencies. Also, all items of government expenditure were cut by ten percent ⁽¹⁷⁾. As a result, the number of expatriates in the government sector fell during the said period.
- b) The rate of growth of expatriates in the government sector was characterized by a relative decline also during the period 1986-1988. However, there was some discrepancy in the rates of growth in each nationality. While the rate of growth of Asian and Arab expatriates reached 78.9% and 73.5% respectively in the period 1980-1992, the rate of growth for other nationalities (Europeans, Americans, Australians and Africans), dramatically increased to reach 3,320% during the same period.
- c) It is clear that the rate of growth of Arab and Asian labour in the government sector has slightly exceeded half that of national labour. As for other non-Arab and non-Asian expatriates, their growth rate was 25 times more than that of the national labour. However, despite this big rise in the growth rate of these labourers, they were small in number and did not exceed four thousand in 1992 ⁽¹⁸⁾. This was due to the fact that this kind of labour constituted refined experts in the various fields of government work. As these people came from countries with high living standards, their salaries and wages in turn should be high.

Thirdly : Classification of Labour Force According to Economic Activity and Geographical Distribution

As we had already studied the total number of expatriates and their nationalities in both the private and government sectors, we found it necessary to study the distribution of expatriates in the important government units, then to examine the distribution of expatriates in the private sector, according to the different economic activities in the country as well as the major occupational groups and their geographical distribution. Accordingly, we have to study the following tables:

TABLE 5. Civil Service Employees Classified by Nationalities and Ministries, 1992

Ministry	Nationality		Total
	Omanis	Expatriate Labour	
Education	13307	13625	26932
Health	6659	7084	13743
Other Government Units	30128	6017	36145
Total	50094	26726	76820

Source: Sultanate of Oman - Ministry of Civil Service, Bulletin of Civil Service Affairs, No. 46, Twelfth Year, Muscat, April 1993 pp. 24-26 (Arabic).

From the data and figures of Table 5, we can derive the following two facts:

1. Government sector expatriates are concentrated in the Ministries of Education and Health. About 77.5% of the total number of expatriates in the government sector work in these two ministries (51% in the Ministry of Education and 26.5% in the Ministry of Health). Moreover, the percentage of expatriates exceeded that of the nationals in these ministries. It reached 50.6% and 51.5% of the total number of employees (nationals and expatriates) in both ministries respectively ⁽¹⁹⁾.
2. There is a lower percentage of expatriates in all other government work units than that in the Ministries of Education and Health. Other ministries and government agencies absorb only 22.5% of the total number of expatriates in the government sector. This may serve as an indication of the country's interest in certain service sectors which are concerned with the building of Omani citizen (such as education and health). So, the country employed this high percentage of expatriates, which exceeds that of national labourers.

As for expatriates who work in the private sector, which amounted to more than 84.5% of the total number of expatriates in 1992⁽²⁰⁾, it is quite useful to refer to the data and figures mentioned in Tables 6 and 7 concerning occupational or professional groups and the economic activity, on the one hand, and the average monthly salary, on the other.

TABLE 6. Labour Cards Issued to non-Omanis Working in the Private Sector by Major Economic Activity, Occupational Groups and Regions, 1992

Major Occupational Groups	Economic Activity	Agriculture & Fisheries	Mining & Quarrying	Water, Gas & Electricity	Construction	Trading, Restaurants and Hotels	Transport, Storage & Communications	Finance, Insurance & Business Services	Manufacturing	Social & Personal Services	More Than One Activity	Total
		Professional & Technical Workers	296	1887	193	6230	11638	485	3327	2040	4625	697
Administrative, Managerial and Clerical Workers	77	490	91	2657	8630	1010	1908	1038	1011	372	17284	
Sales Workers	150	62	6	2824	49261	240	138	3202	1044	607	57532	
Service Workers	686	340	19	3273	23353	260	588	1990	30493	583	61513	
Agriculture, Animal Husbandry Workers & Fishermen	11345	3	1	545	1587	18	19	84	1789	107	15498	
Production Workers	316	456	34	8172	18273	318	549	32773	6335	905	63933	
Machinery Fitters and Operators	230	745	200	26692	17062	415	806	5848	9434	1897	63329	
Other Labourers	227	502	108	66929	22803	1591	750	8905	4173	4455	110623	
Total Workers	No.	13427	4983	654	117322	152589	4363	8083	53882	54204	9623	421132
	%	3.2	1.2	0.1	27.9	36.2	1.0	1.9	13.3	12.9	2.3	100.0
Administrative Regions		Muscat	Al Baidnah	Musandam	Al Wusta	A'Dhahira	A'Dakhliya	A'Sherqiya	Dhofar	Total		
Total Workers	No.	252469	55149	1817	-	25875	18067	25026	42729	421132		
	%	60.0	13.1	0.4	-	6.2	4.3	5.9	10.1	100.0		

Source: Sultanate of Oman - Development Council - General Secretariat, Statistical Year Book 1992, op. cit., pp. 132-137.

*Data on Al-Wusta Region are not available as its workers are included in the total number of those in A'Dakhliya, A'Dhahira and Dhofar, despite the application of the new administrative amendment of 1991.

TABLE 7. Non-Omanis Working in the Private Sector According to Major Occupational Groups, Workers' Nationalities and Average Monthly Salaries, 1992

Major Occupational Groups	Nationality						Average Monthly Salary (R.O.)*	Total Monthly Salaries (1000 R.O.)
	Arabs	Asians	Europeans	Americans	Others	Total No of Workers		
Professional and Technical Workers	3045	25437	2384	331	223	31420	281	8826
Administrative & Managerial Workers	952	4981	755	112	50	6850	525	3597
Clerical Workers	475	9767	154	11	27	10434	183	1905
Sales Workers	1013	56295	175	18	31	57532	100	5733
Service Workers	739	60602	91	9	72	61513	63	3903
Agriculture, Fisherman and Animal Husbandry Workers	530	14944	13	1	10	15498	60	934
Production Workers	783	62244	685	148	73	63933	99	6344
Machinery Fitters and Operators	391	62813	78	20	27	63329	75	4770
Other Labourers	513	109961	96	24	29	110623	67	7395
Total	—	—	—	—	—	421132	103	43407

*R.O. = Rial Omani

Source: a) Data on the number of workers, nationalities and the total amount of salaries (in thousand RO) were collected by the researcher from:

- Sultanate of Oman - Development Council - General Secretariat, Statistical Year Book 1992, op. cit., pp. 138-146.

b) Figures of the average monthly salaries of each major occupational group are calculated by the researcher as follows:

*The total amount of monthly salaries (thousand RO)
The number of workers (in thousands).*

On analyzing the previous two tables, one could conclude the following:

1. Asian expatriates constituted about 96.7% of the total number of expatriates in the private sector, while non-national Arab expatriates did not constitute more than 2%. The remaining percentage (1.3%) were non-Arab or non-Asian expatriates.
2. The distribution of expatriates in the private sector in the Sultanate regions varied at the level of the economic activity sectors, on the one hand, and at the level of the major occupational groups, on the other. This distribution can be summed up in the following points:
 - a) On following up the development of the geographical distribution of expatriates in the private sector, we found that they are concentrated in the regions of big cities and towns (Figure 3). In 1992, only three administrative regions, with more services sectors, absorbed about 83% of the total number of expatriates: the capital took 60%; Al Bafinah, which has relatively big towns such as Sohar, Shinas, Saham, Rustaq and Barka, took 13% ; then Dhofar, which has Salalah (with 121,753 population ⁽²¹⁾), the second largest populated city in the Sultanate after the capital) took 10%. There are low percentages of expatriates in the regions of Musandam, A'Dakhilia, A'Sherqiya, Al Wusta and A'Dhahira (see Table 6). This is because these regions depend on productive sectors like agriculture, animal husbandry, and fishing. Such professions have been practiced and adhered to by Omanis, who are keen not to employ expatriates unless it is extremely necessary.
 - b) While attempting to estimate the size of the expatriate labour force and its distribution to economic activities in the private sector in 1975, it was noticed that it did not exceed 65,000 workers (i.e., one seventh of the total number of expatriates in 1992). It was also noticed that only one economic sector (the construction sector) absorbed about four fifths of the expatriates, followed by the mining and quarrying sector with 5.1%, and finally the transportation sector with 3.3%. So, the three sectors absorbed 89.3% of the total number of expatriates in 1975 ⁽²²⁾. After 17 years, i.e., in the year 1992, this distribution had completely changed as it became clear that three quarters of the total number of private sector expatriates worked in three different economic activities, which were: home trade, restaurants & hotels, construction and manufacturing respectively. They were followed by the sector of personal and society services, which absorbed 13% of the total number of foreign workers in the private sector. The remaining percentage (less than 10%) included workers in other sectors like agriculture, fishing, communications, transportation, storing, water and electricity, gas, mining and quarrying, financial and insurance workers, etc.

From the previously mentioned facts, we conclude the following notes:

- The distribution of expatriates among certain economic activities explains their concentration in urban communities, especially the capital and Salalah.

-The majority of expatriates joined either development sectors which reflect the renaissance and boom that the country witnesses in the fields of urbanization, infrastructure, manufacturing or other sectors that indicate the rising living standards in the country, like home trade, restaurants and hotels, or other fields that are considered aspects of wealth, such as personal and social sectors (maids, cleaning workers, barbers, ironers, ... etc.).

-The change in the proficiency of expatriate labour in the last two decades also showed a change in the country's interests between the stage of planning that aimed at establishing infrastructure with the coming of the era of oil exporting and that of comprehensive economic and social development, then, that of the services which complete aspects of wealth and high living standards, thus keeping pace with the neighbouring Gulf oil states.

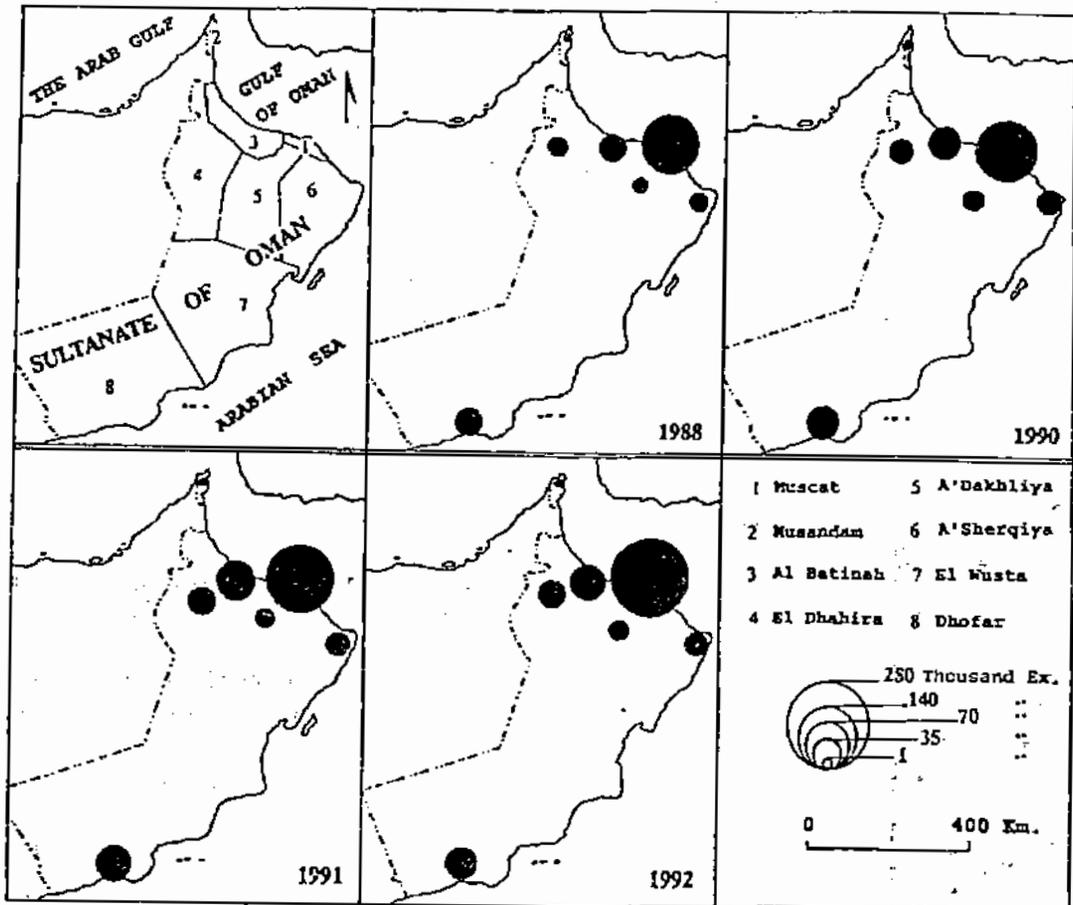


Figure 3. The Development of the Expatriate Workers in the Sultaate by Region, 1988-92.

Diagrammed by the researcher

c) The distribution of expatriates among the major occupational groups in the private sector ⁽²³⁾ varied with respect to size, nationality and the average monthly salary according to the following notes:

- Five of the nine major occupational groups took 84.8% of the total number of expatriates. These groups were : production workers 15.2%, machinery fitters and operators 15%, services workers 14.6%, sales workers 13.7%, and other labourers 26.3%.
- Asian expatriates constituted about 96.7% of the total number of expatriates in the private sector. However, this percentage fell to its minimum of 81% and 72.7% of the group of professional & technical workers and that of administrative managers. This relative fall in the size of Asian labour in both groups was due to the fact that work in such jobs requires knowledge of the Arabic language, on the one hand, as well as the interest of Arab expatriates in working in both professional groups, on the other, because the average salary is high compared with the salaries of other groups.
- The majority of expatriates in the private sector were unqualified (did not hold certificates) ⁽²⁴⁾; they also might be untrained. So, they accepted and bore work under any circumstances. The majority of this kind of labourers worked in certain occupational groups that included about 58.2% of the total number of expatriates in the private sector. These groups were : agriculture workers, fishermen & animal husbandry workers, services workers, sales workers and others. The average monthly salary for a worker in these groups - except for sales workers - ranged between 60 and 67 Rial Omani. As for the sales workers group, the average monthly salary was about 100 Rial Omani. This means that the average monthly salary of a non-qualified worker ranged between 156 and 260 US Dollars ⁽²⁵⁾. This salary is considered very high compared with the wages and salaries in South and South East Asian countries from which the majority of this labour came.

Most of the expatriates who belonged to this group worked in certain sectors like construction & building, home trade, restaurants & hotels, manufacturing and personal & society services (like cooks, maids, cleaning workers, baby sitters, private drivers, barbers, etc.). The group of other labourers alone included slightly more than one quarter of the total number of expatriates who worked in the private sector. Asians constituted about 99.4% of them. So, it is about to be an exclusively Asian group.

- As for the other occupational groups in the private sector, they can be combined into two categories:

The First Category:

Occupational groups that do not require qualifications. Only simple experience that can be acquired in a short period is sufficient. The category includes production workers group and

machinery fitters & operators group ⁽²⁶⁾. Asians alone constitute about 98.3% of the total number of workers in both occupational groups. Therefore, they are considered Asian groups. The average monthly salary in both of them is less than 100 R.O. So, Asian workers' interest in joining these groups is quite clear.

The Second Category:

Occupational groups that necessitate both qualified and experienced labour. It includes the group of professional & technical workers, administrative & managerial workers group and clerical workers. Asians represent 82.5% of the total size of this category, while Arabs constitute 9.2%. A worker in this category obtains an average monthly salary that ranges between 183 and 525 Rial Omani.

Many Asian workers in this category can be substituted by Arab expatriates, because joining this group requires knowledge of the Arabic language. The high average salary will encourage Arab expatriates to join these occupational groups, where it will be easy for Omanis to acquire experience from them. Finally, national labour will take over, in application of the Omanization plan, which we call for patience and prudence in applying it.

Fourthly: The Negative Effects of Expatriates

The problems resulting from the influx of non-national labour into the country are many. Most of the problems are related to economic matters, while others are linked to social and cultural ones.

Through the field study (Questionnaires 1 and 2), such problems can be determined and divided into two types: first, problems faced by the Sultanate as the receiving country; and second, problems from which the expatriates themselves suffer as a result of their alienation.

The first type of problems lies in draining the country's economic wealth in the form of salaries and wages paid to expatriates and in social and cultural effects, such as destroying the Arabic language in the country as a result of the presence of Asian baby-sitters and maids of different nationalities in the Omani families. This has led to the entry of many Indian, Pakistani and Iranian vocabularies into the Arabic language. As a result, Omanis themselves now use some of these vocabularies in daily conversation. Moreover, English is used in formal correspondence in almost all government offices. Also, expatriates have brought new habits and traditions with respect to food and clothing.

The second type of problems are those faced by the expatriates. The most dangerous of them come into sight with labourers who wish to stay in the Sultanate permanently. Some 92.1% of those covered by Questionnaire 2 indicated that they do not want to leave work in the Sultanate voluntarily ⁽²⁷⁾. This is due to the fact that their living standards in the Sultanate are better than those in their home countries. However, expatriates who work in the private sector have feelings of alienation and no sense of belonging because of the instability of their jobs, which, in turn, is due to the possibility of being dismissed after only one month's notice. There are other problems, for example, the sponsor may unjustly take part of the expatriate's income.

TABLE 8. Non-Omani Civil Service Employees by Groups and Approximate Total Monthly Salary, 1992

Groups	No. of Non-Omani Employees	Basic & Final Salary	Average Monthly Salary (R O)	Total Salaries (1000 R O)
Special Group	858	550/4000	1775	1523.0
First Group	829	341/1200	770.5	638.7
Second Group	21064	94/397	245.5	5171.2
Third Group	3975	50/179	114.5	455.3
Total	26726	-	-	7788.2
Average Monthly Salary of a Government Sector Worker				291.4

Source: - Civil Service Employees According to the Group:

Sultanate of Oman - Ministry of Civil Service, Bulletin of Civil Service Affairs, op. cit., p. 24 (Arabic).

- Basic and Final Monthly Salary of Each Group:

a) Royal Decree 8/80 that issued the law of civil service in the Sultanate of Oman, published in the Official paper, Issue No. 189, 9th year, Muscat, 1980, pp. 17-18 (Arabic).

b) Royal Decree 9/88 amending the law of the civil service in the volume of issued and enforced laws of 1988, which was issued by the General Secretariat of the Legislative Body, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Legal Affairs, Volume 17, Muscat, 1989, pp. 49-51 (Arabic).

- Average Monthly Salary : Calculated by the researcher as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Basic Salary} + \text{Final Salary (of each group)}}{2}$$

2

- Total Amount of Monthly Salaries of Expatriate Workers in the Government Sector: Calculated by the researcher as follows:

The number of expatriates in each group X the average monthly salary.

Other examples include maltreatment of expatriates and, finally, the inability of the expatriate to bring his family as a result of the labour laws, that put some conditions that are difficult to be fulfilled.

As the problems are many, we will concentrate on the problem of draining the country's economic resources, which is the most important one.

Draining the Country's Economic Resources:

On analyzing Questionnaire 1, we found that 44.5% of the nationals covered harbour an unfavourable feeling towards expatriates; 45.7% believe that expatriates get wages and salaries that are higher than what they deserve; the percentage of those who do not see a link between expatriates and economic development rises to 28.7% of the nationals who were covered by the questionnaire. Finally, nearly all nationals believe that the rise in the rate of unemployment among Omanis is due to the abundance of expatriates in the country. This is clear indication of two things:

First: The citizen does not appreciate the achievements of expatriates in the Sultanate.

Second: The citizen feels that the country is no longer in need of expatriates in many fields in the government and private sectors.

Going deep in studying the problem statistically, one finds that the total amount of monthly salaries and wages paid to expatriates in the private sector reached 43.4 million Rial Omani ⁽²⁸⁾, or about 520.8 million Rial Omani in 1992 ⁽²⁹⁾, in addition to about 93.5 million Rial Omani paid to expatriates in the government sector as wages and salaries also in the same year (see Table 8) ⁽³⁰⁾. This means that expatriates got 614.5 million Rial Omani in wages and salaries during 1992, i.e., 14% of the growth domestic production (GDP) in the same year. ⁽³¹⁾

In an attempt to calculate the average amount of expatriate transfers of funds and to link the rates of spending inside of the Sultanate with the size of the family, the field study (represented in Questionnaire 2) showed that the average monthly salary of a single expatriate is 92 RO, while his average monthly spending does not exceed 34.7% of the salary. He spends mainly on food. As for expatriate families that include two members or more, the average salary is 373 RO, while the average monthly spending reaches about 28.8%. The family's spending is mainly on food and clothing. This means that the surplus they transferred from the country in 1992 ranged between 400 million to 437 million Rial Omani, i.e., between 9% and 10% of the gross domestic production ⁽³²⁾.

It is worth mentioning that the fall in the number of Arab expatriates has led to a fall in their share of salaries and wages to about 20.92 million Rial Omani in the private sector in 1992 ⁽³³⁾, in addition to 42.7 million Rial Omani in the public sector ⁽³⁴⁾. This indicates that the total income of Arab expatriates in both the private and public sectors did not exceed 63.6 million Rial Omani i.e., one ninth of the total amount of wages and salaries obtained by expatriates of other non-Arab nationalities in 1992.

It seems that expatriates have drained a huge sum of money from the country's budget. The bulk of this sum went to non-Arab expatriates. This stresses at the present stage - the necessity of making use of Arab expertise for the good of both other Arabs and Omanis, up to the time when the country becomes able to dispense with all expatriates (Arabs and non-Arabs), thus applying the "Oman for Omanis" slogan, the "Omanization" principle.

Conclusion:

Expatriates, especially Asians, participated in all economic activities ⁽³⁵⁾ all over the country's eight administrative regions. In fact, expatriate labour was concentrated in Muscat region, but other regions also took their shares of it. The private sector seemed completely dependent on such labour. Many harmful effects resulted from the rise in the percentage of expatriates in the country. So, many people called for Omanization, i.e. substituting Omanis for expatriates, a matter which necessitates taking some measures and actions that can be summed up in the following:

1. Restricting, then prohibiting the employing of expatriates in simple professions that do not need long experience and can be performed by nationals ⁽³⁶⁾.
2. Encouraging the nationals to embark on manual work through giving them loans, providing them with pieces of land to establish projects and exempting them from taxes for some years.
3. Spreading training and rehabilitation centres all over the country to teach national cadres.

Making people aware of the importance of work in the private sector so that they can positively respond and accept employment in the various economic activities in the said sector.
4. Adding no new privileges to public (civil) sector employment and reducing the difference in salaries with the private sector.

Encouraging the private sector to employ nationals by granting financial aids to employers who appoint large numbers of nationals.
5. Opening the door for women to participate effectively in work.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire 1

The Opinions of Omanis With Respect to Expatriate Labour
and Their Role in Development

Age: Sex: Occupation: Monthly Salary:

Place (✓) after the correct sentences and an (x) after the false ones.

- There is a relationship between expatriates and economic development in the Sultanate ().
- The efficiency and productivity of the national citizen are less than those of the expatriate ().
- I think that the expatriate represents a threat to the country's economy ().
- Few Asian expatriates are indisciplined and need continuous direction ().
- I think that my living standard will rise with the fall of the number of expatriates ().
- I oppose expatriates' living in citizens' areas ().
- I support quick Omanization ().

Choose ONLY ONE Answer:

- The rise of the percentage of Asian expatriates (in both private and public sectors) is due to the fact that they are :
 - a) more diligent ()
 - b) more obedient ()
 - c) employable for lower wages ()
 - d) all previous answers ().
- Wages and salaries of expatriates are :
 - a) very high compared to the amount of work ()
 - b) enough for a satisfactory living standard ()
 - c) very low ()
- If I have to choose between work in the government sector and in the private sector, I will chose :
 - a) the government sector ()
 - b) the private sector ()

Complete the following :

- The advantages of government sector employment in your personal opinion:

1. 2. 3. 4.

- The most serious problems caused by expatriates:

1. 2. 3. 4.

Appendix 2

Questionnaire 2

The opinions of Expatriates on work in the Sultanate

Age: Sex: Nationality: Qualification:

Date of arrival to the Sultanate:

Occupation or profession:

Number of family members:

Monthly salary (in the Sultanate):

Choose ONLY ONE Answer:

- Marital status :
 Single () Married () Married and have children ()
- Accommodation: Single () with family ()
- Type of work : Government Sector () Private Sector ()
- I save from my monthly salary :
 less than 10% () 10% to less than 25%
 25% to less than 50% () 50% to less than 75% ()
 more than 75% ()

Place (✓) after correct sentences and an (x) after false ones:

- I think that the presence of expatriates threatens the Sultanate's economy ().
- I feel secure and stable in my work in the Sultanate ().
- I feel I belong to the Sultanate ().
- I feel wronged because of the difference of wages and salaries with nationals ().
- I intend to stay permanently if I get the opportunity ().
- I aim only to make money ().
- My salary meets my needs, and there is a surplus to be saved ().
- Public services in Oman are better than those in my country ().
- I spend most of my salary on food only ().
- I master other languages in addition to my native language ().

Place (✓) after the right answer or answers:

The problems I face in the Sultanate:

- I cannot bring my family ().
- The sponsor takes part of my income ().
- The salary is low and not enough ().
- I get unfavourable treatment from nationals ().

Appendix 3

Major Occupational Groups

1. Professional and Technical Workers:

Physical and biological scientists, architects and engineers, economists, accountants, jurists, teachers, aircrafts and ships' officers, medical workers, dental workers, veterinary workers, statisticians, mathematicians, system analysts and related workers, workers in religion, public relations officers, journalists, sculptors, painters, photographers, composers & performing artists and professional technical workers not elsewhere classified.

2. Administrative, Managerial and Clerical Workers:

Managers, clerical supervisors & workers, stenographers, typists & tape punching machine operators, cashiers, computing machine operators, transport and communications conductors, mail distribution clerks and telephone & telegraph operators.

3. Sales Workers:

Managers and working proprietors (wholesale and retail trade), sales supervisors and buyers, technical salesmen, commercial travellers, manufacturers, agents and insurance workers, securities and business services salesmen, auctioneers, salesmen and related workers.

4. Services Workers:

Managers and related working proprietors (catering and lodging services), building caretakers, char-workers, cleaners and related workers, launderers and dry-cleaners, hair-dressers, barbers, beauticians, cooks, waiters, bartenders & related workers, maids & related house-keeping service workers not elsewhere classified and service workers not elsewhere classified.

5. Agriculture, Fishermen and Husbandry Workers:

Farm managers & farmers, agricultural and animal husbandry workers, forestry workers, fishermen and hunters & related workers.

6. Production Workers:

Production supervisors and general foremen, miners, quarrymen, well drillers, metal processors, wood preparation workers, paper makers, chemical processors, spinners, weavers, knitters, dyers, tanners, fellmongers, food & beverages processors, tailors, dressmakers, sewers and upholsterers.

7. Machinery Fitters and Operators:

Leather-goods makers, cabinet-makers, stone cutters & carvers, blacksmiths, tool operators, machinery fitters, machine assemblers, electrical & electronics workers, broadcasting station and sound equipment operators, cinema projectionists, plumbers, welders, structural metal preparers & erectors, jewelry & precious metal workers, glass formers and potters & related workers.

8. Other Labourers:

Rubber and plastics product makers, printers, painters, production workers not elsewhere classified, bricklayers, carpenters & other construction workers, stationary engine & related equipment operators, material handling & related equipment operators, dockers & freight handlers, transport equipment operators and labourers not elsewhere classified.

Notes:

1. Emigrants were represented in settling movements to Zanzibar, which was part of the Omani Empire, and also emigrations which resulted from internal wars upon the rule of Sultan Sa'eed Bin Taimour, and finally migrations which were the direct results of the early discovery of oil in the other Arab Gulf states with the accompanying rise in demand for manpower.

As for returnees, they represent those who migrated to Zanzibar and Gulf States. They started to return to Oman in 1970 with the improvement in economic and political situations in the country, after the pardoning of exiles, lifting the travel ban and the discovery of oil.

With respect to immigrations, the oldest are those of the slaves who were brought from Africa in the past centuries, in addition to Zadjali and Bloshi groups who came from Blochestan (Pakistan) and from Makran Coast (Iran), as well as other Indian and Iranian groups, such as Lotis who came from the Indian sub-continent.

* For more details on the subjects see:

-Abu Ayana, F.M., Population and Urbanization - Applied Research Papers in Some Arab Countries, Darul Ma'arifa Al-Gami 'ya, Alexandria, 1987, pp. 201-213 (Arabic).

-Abu El-lla, M.T., Geography of Oman's Region - Sultanate of Oman and Emirates State, Al-Falah Bookshop, Kuwait, 1988, pp. 71-88 (Arabic).

2. Two types of questionnaires were designed. Some 400 forms of the first type were distributed to a random sample of nationals, with 50 forms to each of the Sultanate's administrative region. The second type of questionnaire was especially designed for expatriates. Some 450 forms were distributed, with 100 forms to Muscat (the home of most expatriates) and 50 forms to every administrative region. Students of the Geography Department, Faculty of Arts, Sultan Qaboos University helped in collecting the forms after distributing them in the administrative regions during the mid-year holiday in January 1994.

The researcher benefited from the data of 348 questionnaire forms of the type distributed to nationals. He also made use of 416 forms of the type directed to expatriates. Other forms were excluded because they contained contradictory answers and they were not credible.

3. Gunatilleke, G., "Introduction" in : Migration of Asian Workers to the Arab World, edited by Godfrey Gunatilleke, The United Nations University, Tokyo, 1986, p.5.
4. Ibid.
5. Shaw, R. Paul, Mobilizing Human Resources in the Arab World, edited by Elia Zureik, Kegan Paul International Ltd., London, 1983, p.5.

6. Calculated by the researcher. The total oil reserves at the end of 1992 stood at a record of 4,604 million barrels (731.9 million cubic meters). For more details see:
 - Petroleum Development of Oman - Department of Public Affairs and Information, Annual Report for 1992, International Printing Press, Muscat, 1993, p.16.
7. Arab Labour Organization - Arab Employment Association, The Unified Report Regarding Information on Manpower and Employment in the Arab Countries, December 1986, Tangier, p. 56 (Arabic).
8. Information arrived at by the researcher from analysing the data of Questionnaire 1 (enclosed). Only 3.7% of the nationals said that the South Asian expatriates do not carry out all the tasks they are asked to do. They also pointed out that those expatriates perform the work but with more direction and blame.
9. Labib, A., The Causes of the Spread of Employing (Asian) Expatriates in Arab Gulf Countries, Research submitted to the Seminar of Foreign labour in Arab Gulf Countries, 15-18 January 1983, Centre for Arab Unity Studies, Arab Planning Institute, Kuwait, 1983, pp. 10-13 (Arabic).
10. See Table 3, it shows that the total number of Asian expatriates is 417, 590, of which about 407,044 (97.4%) work in the private sector, while those who work in the government sector do not exceed 10,546 (2.6%).
11. According to Questionnaire 1.
12. Sultanate of Oman - Development Council - General Secretariat, Statistical Year Book 92, Twenty First Issue, Muscat, July 1993, p. 59.
13. Fakhro, M.A., Women at Work in the Gulf - A Case Study of Bahrain, Kegan Paul International, London, 1990, p.43.
14. Sultanate of Oman - Development Council - General Secretariat, Statistical Year Book 92, Op. Cit., p. 120.
15. Ibid, 47.
16. In the School year 1969/70, there were only three primary schools in which 30 teachers worked. All pupils were males, and their number was only 90. Entering schools required the approval of the Sultan personally. In 1992/93, the picture had completely changed. The number of schools reached 378, some 348 of them are for girls, in addition to 155 mixed schools. About 19,000 male and female teachers worked in these schools. The number of pupils exceeded 425,000, including more than 200,000 girls.

For more details see:

- Ibid. p. 575.

- Sultanate of Oman - Development Council, National Statistics Department, Statistical Year Book 1970-74, Second Issue, Muscat, 1974, pp. 11-17.

17. Excerpts from a speech by H.E. Qais Abdul Moneim Al-Zawawi, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic and Financial Affairs, in an Introduction to the Third Five-year Development Plan, Muscat, June 1987 (Arabic).

18. See Table 4.

19. Sultanate of Oman - Civil Service Ministry, Bulletin of Civil Service Affairs, No. 46, Twelfth Year, Muscat, April 1993, pp. 24-26 (Arabic).

20. a) The Total number of expatriates in the country equals the number of expatriates in the government sector plus the number of expatriates in the private sector: $447,858 = 26,726 + 421,132$.

The number of expatriates in both the public and private sectors in this table does not match the total number of expatriate workers in Table 1. The figures in this table do not include those working in the Royal Court and the general corporations, as there are no detailed data on their nationalities or their occupational groups.

21. Sultanate of Oman - Development Council - The Technical Secretariat, First Results of the General Census of Population, Houses and Establishments, Muscat, December 1993, Table 1 (Arabic).

22. Sultanate of Oman - Development Council, The Five-Year Development Plan 1976-1980, Muscat, 1976, p.61 (Arabic).

23. Appendix 3 shows the details of the major occupational groups and the professions included in each group.

24. On analyzing the Questionnaire 2, which was directed to expatriates in both private and government sectors, it was found that 74.9% of those covered can write and speak in their native language only. As for those who know more than one language, their percentage did not exceed 45%. Those who have non-university degrees represented about 19.5%. Those who hold university degrees formed only 5.6% of the total number of those covered by the questionnaire, i.e., 416 workers.

25. One Rial Omani (RO) equals approximately 2.6 American Dollars.
26. See Appendix 3.
27. Thirty-three expatriates (most of them Arabs), i.e., 7.95% of those covered by Questionnaire 2, indicated their strong relationship with their home countries and their desire to return on the expiry of their contracts in the Sultanate.
28. See Table 7.
29. Calculated by the researcher (43.4 Million RO x 12).
30. Calculated by the researcher (7.7882 Million RO x 12).
31. Gross Domestic Product at producers' value (without import duties) = 4,369.6 million RO in 1992. For more details see:
 - a) Sultanate of Oman - Development Council, The Statistical Year Book 1992, Op. Cit., p. 387.
 - b) Calculated by the researcher : $(614.3 \times 100 \div 4,369.6 = 14\%)$.
32. Calculated by the researcher, depending on the analysis of data of Questionnaire 2.
33. Calculated by the researcher, relying on data and figures of Table 7, by multiplying the number of Arab workers in each occupational group by the average monthly salary of the occupational group in RO.
34. The researcher calculated the total amount of the income of Arab expatriates who worked in the government sector in 1992, taking into account the fact that the number of Arab expatriates in the government sector reached 12,212 workers (Table 2) and that the average monthly income of the expatriate in the government sector reached 291.4 RO (Table 8). It was calculated as follows :

12,212 workers x 291.4 RO x 12 months = 42.7 million RO.
35. Excluding a few activities like fishing & the fish trade, agriculture, and traditional crafts.
36. Ministerial Decree (Ministry of Social Affairs and Work) No. 51/1993, listing the professions that are prohibited for expatriates, such as fishing, fish transport and sale, animal husbandry, traditional crafts, guarding, driving, hairdressing, laundry, water well digging and typewriting. In general, there are no immediate effects of this decision on the Omani market, because the prohibition covers new expatriates, not present ones.

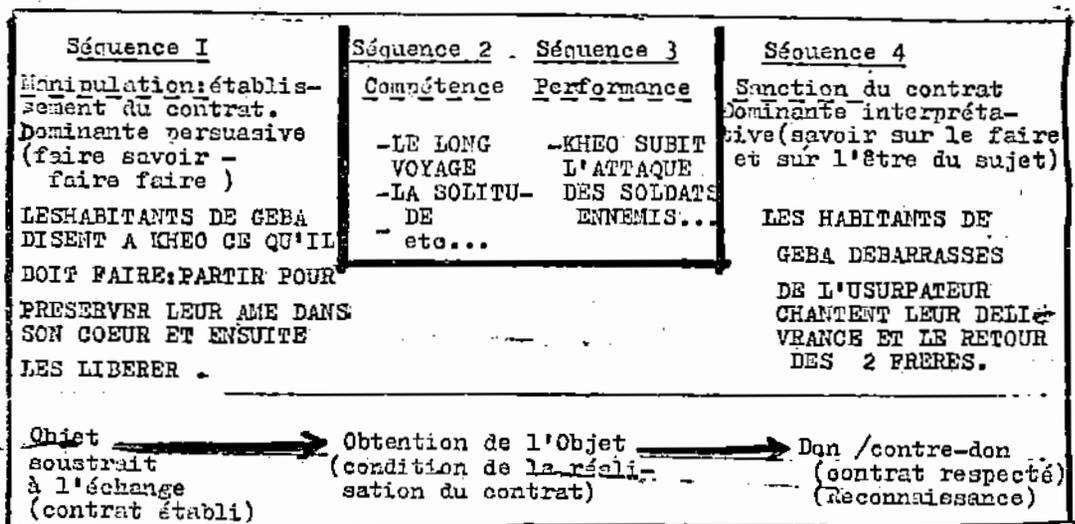
SONIA IBRAHIM EKDAVI

Docteur es Lettres

LECTURE SEMIOLOGIQUE DU CONTE
D'A. CHEDID "LE COEUR SUSPENDU".

l'objet) ; ensuite du destinataire vers le sujet (mouvement de reconnaissance).

La dominante peut être dite alors interprétative et non plus comme au départ, persuasive. Un savoir sur l'être du sujet et/ou l'objet apparaît. "Les composantes contractuelles-cognitives encadrent l'ensemble narratif.(...)Le reste du récit paraissant alors comme son exécution par les deux parties contractantes.(...) Au niveau de la séquence d'acquisition de la "compétence", le sujet est qualifié : il acquiert les modalités du devoir-savoir-vouloir-pouvoir faire. Au niveau de la séquence de réalisation de la "performance" il accomplit l'épreuve principale" Et Adam établit le schéma linéaire suivant qui peut s'appliquer au conte d'Andrée Chédid. (Cf. Le Texte Narratif, Nathan, 1985, P.78 . C'est l'auteur qui souligne.)



"Bien sûr, commente Adam, ces quatre phases articulées à la fois linéairement (séqu. 1 + séq.2 + séq.3 + séq.4) et logiquement (séqu.1 et 4 = dimension contractuelle et cognitive ; séq.2 et 3 = dimension pratique actionnelle) constituent une construction toute théorique, abstraite. Les récits réalisés insistent plus particulièrement sur l'une ou l'autre de ces séquences ; certaines peuvent être simplement sous-entendues, d'autres redoublées ou triplées (cas fréquent, dans le conte merveilleux). Comme le soulignent les sémioticiens, cette description ne fournit pas le plan type des récits : l'analyse narrative ne consiste pas à faire rentrer les textes dans un cadre défini à l'avance, mais au contraire, à utiliser le cadre théorique général et rigoureux pour rendre compte de la spécificité de chaque texte".

Selon Greimas l'encadrement du Sujet par les deux segments contractuels n'est pas à négliger. La Manipulation peut être considérée comme le lieu d'établissement du contrat et la Sanction comme sanction par rapport à l'exécution du même contrat. Dans le conte d'Andrée Chédid, la MANIPULATION apparaît dans les paroles des habitants de Gèba citées plus haut (cf. p. 1-2) ; quant à la SANCTION elle est exprimée dans la phrase suivante : "...portant les deux frères sur ses épaules, la population chanta sa délivrance et leur retour". En général, la sanction porte sur la récompense des bons et la punition des méchants.

Mais rappelons que le moteur de la narration qui déclenche ce mouvement à quatre temps, c'est l'existence d'un manque initial (l'invasion du pays par l'ennemi). Il est ensuite proposé au héros d'accomplir une tâche (énoncé signalant un faire) qui permettra d'effacer ce manque (recouvrer l'indépendance). Le héros rencontre les adjuvants qui lui fournissent le cadre de cette épreuve qualifiante et les moyens d'entreprendre l'épreuve principale suivante. Le schéma actantiel précédent peut être ainsi complété :

Sujet-héros
(Kheo) (2)



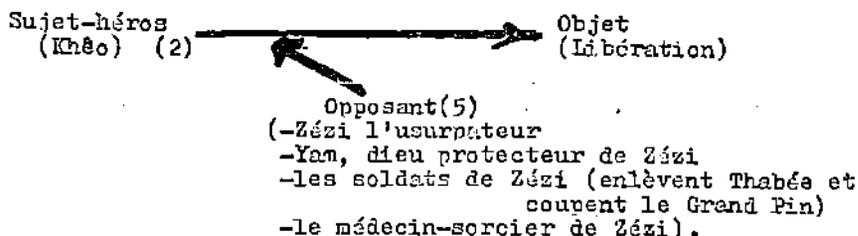
Objet
(Libération)

(4) Adjuvant

- l'ermite : indique raccourcis, apprend à construire une hutte.
- Bès, génie protecteur: lui cherche une épouse pour diminuer sa solitude.
- les habitants qui l'accueillent, lui donnent à boire et à manger.
- son frère Bastos qui lui rend la vie.
- Yam, dieu protecteur de Zézi qui d'opposant devient adjuvant à la fin.)

La séquence d'acquisition de la compétence est centrée principalement sur le rapport des flèches (2) et (4) du schéma actantiel, tandis que la manipulation porte sur les flèches (1), (2) et (3) du même schéma qui se complète ainsi progressivement. Dans les deux cas, on pourrait constater une dominante (1) et (2) lors de la manipulation, (4) lors de l'épreuve qualifiante liée à la compétence.

Pour compléter le schéma actantiel, il faut ajouter le rôle de l'opposant .



Khêo surmonte les obstacles et il est enfin récompensé . Le ^aprécours du conte peut alors s'exprimer ainsi :

Situation initiale —————> épreuve qualifiante —————> épreuve glorifiante —————> situation finale.

La situation initiale était caractérisée par l'invasion du pays par l'ennemi et la nécessité du départ de Khêo qui va subir les épreuves qualifiantes . Il va ainsi accomplir courageusement son dur et long voyage (d'abord une très longue marche à pied longeant le fleuve qui traversait tout son pays, puis il ^{Parcourut} un désert , ensuite redescendit vers la côte pour s'embarquer en haute mer pendant trente jours; quand le vaisseau jeta l'ancre , il entreprit une lente ascension durant vingt jours pour arriver jusqu'à la grotte de l'Érmite où il passa la nuit ; et le lendemain il escalada une courte falaise, passa un col, monta encore , gravit un contrefort , "monta monta encore ; affronta la crépuscule, pénétra dans la nuit" , nous dit l'auteur , et enfin à l'aurore se trouva devant le Grand Pin .)

A cette épreuve qualifiante ajoutons l'endurance de la solitude et l'existence (la vie) sans coeur . Ce qui lui permettra de passer à l'étape suivante qui comprend d'autres épreuves : tout d'abord la lutte contre les soldats de Zézi qui capturent sa femme Thabée , et ensuite sa mort apparente jusqu'à la découverte de son coeur par son frère . Ayant réussi à désarmer les opposants et grâce à l'appui de son frère, il passe à la situation finale qui est la libération de son pays, le manque initial est ainsi liquidé. Ceci correspond à la fin du conte où les habitants de Gêbe heureux acclament le héros qui retrouve ainsi son épouse.

Il est à noter que le héros Khéo est resté apparemment mort pendant plusieurs saisons "des jours passèrent, des saisons..." nous dit l'auteur sans préciser, en attendant que son frère Bastos retrouve son coeur enfoui sous les "aiguilles de pin (et) les éclats de bois". Pendant ce temps Bastos avait mis le corps dans un abri rocheux au milieu de la neige pour le conserver. C'est le processus de conservation dont parle Bremond (1).

"Le maintien du patient dans son état initial est déterminé positivement : c'est le résultat d'une action". Khéo est maintenu dans son état "congelé" par l'achèvement du processus de conservation. Pendant plusieurs saisons Bastos cherchait sans répit, gardant toujours l'espoir malgré les moments de doute et d'hésitation. Il grandissait alors que son frère restait tel quel.

(1) Logique du Récit, Seuil, 1973, P.142

Voir aussi

Ekdawi (Sonia), Lecture sémiologique des Contes de la Contesse de Séaur, Librairie Franco-Egyptienne, 1968, P.8

le petit Henri dans le conte du Bon Petit Henri, craignait de laisser sa mère malade seule, "elle sera morte bien avant mon retour", dit-il à la fée qui le tranquillisa affirmant qu'elle restera "dans l'état où tu la vois actuellement."

2- ANALYSE (MORPHO)LOGIQUE .

Cette analyse sémiotique du conte peut être complétée par une analyse (morpho)logique , c'est à Larivaille que nous la devons . Celui-ci en développant le modèle quinaire de la séquence narrative - revoit les travaux de Propp et de Greimas et ajoute aux épreuves qualificante , principale et glorifiante une séquence antérieure de Proposition de tâche au héros virtuel qui correspond tout à fait à la manipulation dont il vient d'être question . Il ajoute aussi une séquence de Confirmation entre la Performance-Épreuve principale et la Sanction-Épreuve glorifiante , que Adam considère comme une seconde Performance . Le héros risque de tout perdre au cours de cette séquence de Confirmation : l'objet auquel il aspire aussi bien que la vie . C'est ce qui aurait pu arriver à Khéo si Bastos n'était pas venu à son secours . Adam propose à la suite de Propp et de Larivaille un type d'enchaînement séquentiel canonique du conte merveilleux .

Sn étant la séquence narrative , nous avons

Sn0 = Préparation

Sn1 = Proposition manipulation

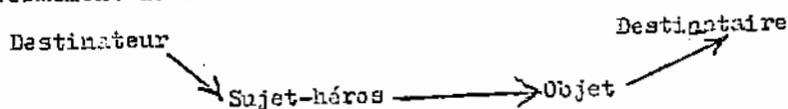
Sn2 = Qualification-compétence

Sn3 = Affirmation-Performance

Sn4 = Confirmation-Performance (bis)

Sn5 = Glorification-Sanction . (Le Texte Narratif, P.80)

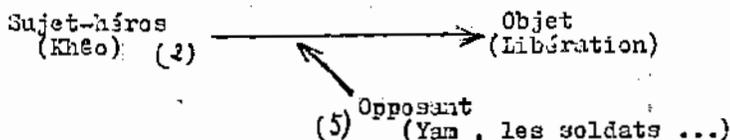
Bien sûr , ce modèle canonique est soumis à bien des transformations comme c'est ici le cas : la séquence I comprend la manipulation proposition d'une tâche au héros . L'état initial est caractérisé par un manque , comme nous l'avons déjà montré , le héros décide d'agir : acquisition du vouloir faire qui motive sa quête . Il passe un contrat qu'il remplira au terme du récit . Une action de transmission d'un objet de valeur se trouve à présent orientée, motivée et enclenchée conformément au schéma actantiel :



Puis Sn2 , le héros (Khéo) entre dans le lieu symbolique des épreuves qui lui permettent d'acquérir la Compétence , c'est-à-dire les moyens d'accomplir l'épreuve principale suivante (performance) . Khéo est parti , car son "coeur est mis à prix , et ce coeur , dit-il, n'appartient plus à moi seul : il contient tout l'espoir de notre peuple . Il faut que je me hâte de le mettre en lieu sûr . Je pars pour une terre lointaine ; là-bas , séparé de mon coeur , je vivrai sans inquiétude . Je pourrai réfléchir et reprendre des forces pour revenir " . Et un peu plus loin , toujours parlant à sa mère et à son frère , il ajoute : "...je connaîtrai d'autres visages , j'apprendrai d'autres contrées . Je rencontrerai la solitude ; elle aussi me préparera à l'avenir ." L'Ermite confirmera cela : "De cette butte (...) tu pourras contempler le monde à une distance profitable à la réflexion (...) ton caractère se trempera , tes forces s'affermiront pour le retour " . De plus , le jeune homme devenu corps sans coeur "n'éprouver(a) plus de profonde détresse ; mais non plus d'éclatantes joies . Ses sentiments mis en sourdine , il pourra observer d'un oeil plus lucide l'univers , exercer son esprit et ses muscles , s'aguerrir " .

Comme nous le voyons les moyens de son succès seront acquis au cours de ses épreuves . Etant arrivé au lieu du Grand Pin au prix d'un voyage long et pénible et ayant supporté la solitude , le héros est qualifié à la fin de cette séquence mais il doit acquérir les moyens (compétence) de son succès futur (performance) . A la fin de la séquence précédente il possédait un devoir-vouloir faire (résultat de la manipulation et du contrat) , il vient ici d'acquérir le savoir-faire pour devenir un sujet "compétent" .

La troisième séquence est illustrée par le schéma :



Dégradation possible
(les saisons passent , Bastos ne trouve rien .)

Moyens à mettre en oeuvre
(Bastos apprend à subsister en tenant son existence secrète)

Dégradation possible
(parfois il s'assombrissait, s'enfonçait dans le chagrin, sentait sa jeunesse lui filer entre les doigts , il s'abandonnait au désespoir .)

Dégradation surmontée
(la voix de son frère lui revenait : " C'est mon sort et celui de tout ton peuple que tu détiens . Garde confiance Bastos , tu finiras par trouver !")

Processus
(l'espoir renaît - Bastos retrouve ses forces et cherche encore)

Obstacle surmonté
(Un matin , à la pointe du jour ... Bastos aperçoit ... une graine rosâtre en forme de coeur)

Moyens à mettre en oeuvre
(Bastos recueille avec précaution et tendresse cette graine)

Processus
(selon les recommandations de son frère, il asperge la graine d'eau sans cesser un instant de la couvrir des yeux et de lui parler)

Amélioration obtenue Cœur
(dans le corps conservé , il remet le χ réanimé et Khéo reprend vie)

Tout texte narratif, dit Adam , se compose soit d'une simple séquence, soit d'une suite combinée de séquences . Dans ce dernier cas , trois possibilités se présentent : les séquences sont alternées , les séquences sont enchâssées ou emboîtées , les séquences sont enchaînées. La première forme est plus complexe et moins fréquente , elle développe au moins deux intrigues , elle correspond surtout au roman par lettres et à certaines fictions modernes . . La seconde forme est plus fréquente . Todorov définit ainsi l'emboîtement : "Une séquence entière se substitue à une proposition de la première séquence". La troisième forme s'adapte en général à la majorité des récits complexes dont le conte merveilleux fait partie .

4- EXEMPLE D'ENCHASSEMENT - EMBOTTEMENT.

Sn = séquence narrative

Pn = proposition narrative

Le Coeur Suspendu pp. 38 à 40 : La ruse de Bès = Sa enchâssée

- Pn 1 Etat initial
(Thabée vivant chez l'usurpateur)
- Pn 2 Complication
(apparition de Bès , génie protecteur de Khéo)
- Pn 3 Evaluation
(Bès découvre la présence de Thabée qui ne le reconnaît pas)
- Pn 4 Résolution
(Bès devient le confident de Zézi l'usurpateur pour découvrir le secret de Thabée)
- Pn 5 Etat Final
(Bès connaît la vérité : Zézi a coupé Thabée de sa mémoire , il a fait abattre le Grand Pin et Khéo n'existe plus.)

Le conte présente d'autres séquences enchâssées qu'on pourrait analyser de la même façon comme par exemple pp.22-23 dialogue entre Khéo et Thabée ; etc.

CONCLUSION.

Nous pouvons conclure avec cette définition du récit de Todorov : "Un récit idéal commence par une situation stable qu'une force quelconque vient perturber . Il en résulte un état de déséquilibre ; par l'action d'une force dirigée en sens inverse l'équilibre est rétabli ; le second équilibre est bien semblable au premier mais les deux ne sont jamais identiques . Il y a par conséquent deux types d'épisodes dans un récit : ceux qui décrivent un état (d'équilibre ou de déséquilibre) et ceux qui décrivent le passage d'un état à l'autre."(1) Khéo dont le nom pourrait être une abréviation de Khéops (2) a réussi à rétablir l'équilibre dans son pays . Cet autre Osiris, tué par la haine et la jalousie, renaît grâce à l'amour .

(1) Poétique , No45, 1973 (2) Quelques éléments de ce récit, dit A. Chéid, sont, très librement, tirés du Conte des Deux Frères: manuscrit de l'Egypte ancienne, env. 1300 av. J.C. Papyrus découvert en 1850.

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