



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

YEMENI HERITAGE WEEK : MUSEUMS UNITED FOR YEMEN

Participating Museums

1. Freer|Sackler, Smithsonian - USA
2. The Walters Art Museum - USA
3. The Metropolitan Museum of Art - USA
4. The Ashmolean Museum - UK
5. The British Museum - UK
6. Musée du Louvre - France
7. Museo Nazionale d'Arte
Orientale 'G. Tucci' (MNAOr) - Italy
8. Peter the Great's Museum of
Anthropology and Ethnography
(Kunstkamera) - Russia
9. The State Hermitage Museum - Russia
10. The State Museum of Oriental Art -
Russia



art code

ASHMOLEAN

MUSEUM OF ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

EXHIBITION

YEMENI HERITAGE WEEK:
MUSEUMS UNITED FOR YEMEN

April 24-30, 2016



Inscribed alabaster plaque with an ibex.
This plaque was probably displayed in a temple.
The words 'to dedicate' (hqny) in the Sabean
language are preserved. About 600 BC
AN2011.47



#UNITE4HERITAGE

The cultural heritage of Yemen carries the soul of the Yemeni people, reflecting a millennial history that it belongs to all humanity.

Yemen is home to unique heritage sites and monuments from both pre-Islamic and Islamic period – including four UNESCO World Heritage sites, three cultural (Old Walled City of Shibam, Old City of Sana'a, Historic Town of Zabid) and one natural (Socotra Archipelago), recognized for their outstanding universal value. I see all of these as an open book on humanity's cultural diversity.

The conflict that erupted in Yemen in March 2015 has caused immense suffering and the tragic loss of human lives. It is also placing unique heritage at the risk of total destruction. The Old City of Sana'a has suffered severe damage as a consequence of shelling and explosions. Sana'a has been inhabited for more than 2,500 years and bears witness to the wealth and beauty of all Islamic civilization. I am convinced that this destruction exacerbates human suffering, undermining societies over the long-term, weakening the ground for reconciliation and peace.

Whenever culture is attacked, we must stand together and respond with even more culture and knowledge, to foster mutual understanding and safeguard the heritage shared by all humanity. This is the purpose of UNESCO's global campaign #Unite4Heritage. As part of this campaign, together with 10 leading museums around the world, UNESCO has launched the Yemeni Heritage Week – Museums United for Yemen, to raise awareness about the wealth of Yemen's culture and history. Partner museums will highlight their collections of Yemeni artefacts and introduce us to their unique beauty, knowledge and wisdom.

I thank you all for sharing and appreciating the outstanding universal power of Yemeni culture – and I call on you all to stand with us to defend the power of heritage for peace. Protecting culture is not about caring for stones – it is about saving and defending the meaning people ascribe to their lives.

Irina Bokova

Sculptures from Ancient South Arabia

From around 1000 BC the domestication of the camel on the Arabian Peninsula began to transform the lives of the inhabitants. This was especially true in South Arabia where frankincense and myrrh trees could be tapped for their fragrant resins. Camels were used to transport these resins over thousands of miles to the markets of the Near East and the Mediterranean where they were highly prized as incense and perfume. The kingdoms of South Arabia grew immensely wealthy on this trade and their cities and tombs were embellished with sculpture.

The oldest and most important South Arabian Kingdom was that of Saba, which is referred to as Sheba in the Bible.

By the third century BC Saba was being challenged as the most powerful kingdom by Qataban. Its capital lay at Timna. Tombs were decorated with alabaster steles carved with images of the deceased and often inscribed with their names. The region flourished in the First century AD, as trade developed between the Roman Empire and India. Other powerful kingdoms at this time included Hadramawt and Himyar.



Face plaque
Probably from Hayd ibn Aqil, Timna
About 100 BC-AD 100
AN2011.48



Base for a face plaque
inscribed in Qatabanic
Probably from Hayd ibn Aqil, Timna
About 100 BC-AD 100
AN2011.50



Incense burner
Shabwa, Hadramawt
About AD 100-200
AN1952.529



Base for face plaque
inscribed in Qatabanic
Probably from Hayd ibn Aqil, Timna
About 100 BC-AD 100
AN2011.51



Carved bull's head
Shabwa, Hadramawt
About 100 BC-AD 100
AN1954.754



Funerary bust
inscribed 'Zillat, the one of Mat'
Shabwa, Hadramawt
About 100 BC-AD 100
AN1954.753

By around AD 570 South Arabia was being administered as part of the Persian Sasanian Empire (visit gallery 13). Some sixty years later Sasanian power collapsed in the face of Arab armies united by Islam and new artistic traditions were introduced (visit gallery 31).