

Element Form

1. Defining the cultural heritage element

- Name of the element as used:

Al Das

- Other name(s):

Al Majaz

- Domain(s) of heritage manifested by the element:

Skills associated with traditional craftsmanship – Traditional agricultural tools
(*Das*)

- Practitioners and groups concerned:

Blacksmiths
Farmers, farm owners

- Geographical location and range of the element:

Agricultural areas in oases and valleys

- Brief description of the element:

The history of this tool in the UAE dates back to the 3rd millennium BC, as excavators found a sickle (*das*) with a serrated edge in the (Al Dour) and (Maleiha) sites. *Das* is the sickle used to remove weeds and ears of wheat during harvest.¹ It is used to chop down small trees, branches and twigs and is also used in chopping down alfalfa plants without removing the roots,

¹ Faleh Hanthal: Summary of the Emirati Dialect Dictionary in the UAE, p. 208.

thereby allowing them to regrow. Furthermore, *das* is used in harvesting wheat and cutting ears of wheat.

Das consists of a grip made of wood, a body, followed by a slightly curved blade with a sharp and serrated inner edge.

According to one of the narrators,²

“*Das*, which we also call *majaz*, is made of iron. There are two types of *das*, one of which is used to harvest alfalfa (*jatt*), while the other is used to chop down the palm tree harvest. This type is a little longer, so that the farmer is not exposed to the thorns of the palm while harvesting. To produce a *das*, we would get a piece of iron and head to the blacksmith, who would first make the strong wooden grip. People usually preferred the wood of the (*Narinj*) citrus that was characterized by strength and durability. A blacksmith who does this work can be found in every area.” The blacksmith uses fire to melt the iron, and shape it as required using a hammer and anvil.³

2. Features of the Element:

- Concerned practitioners and performers of the element (including name, gender, occupational category, etc.):

Men: farmers and blacksmiths

- Other participants whose work relates to the element:

Workers in the field of harvesting, farming, animal husbandry

Farm owners

- The language (s) used (in the element):

The local dialect used while working, exchanging experiences and for the element’s various uses.

² A field interview with Rabie Saadoun Zuwaid Al Nuaimi, Souq Al Qattara, 18/01/2016.

³ Yussef Al Addan, *Hands of Gold*, Emirates Heritage Club, 1st Edition, 2001, p. 86.

- Tangible elements associated with the practice of the element and its transmission, such as: instruments, equipment, costumes, spaces, and ritual tools (if any):

Fire, anvil, hammer, charcoal, stove for the fire, pieces of wood, a bowl of water

- Other intangible elements related to the practice and transmission of the element in question (if any):

Singing songs and chants while producing the element and using it.

- Customary practices governing access to the element or any of its specific aspects:

The production of *das* and its agricultural uses are practised in accordance with societal customs, traditions and standards.

- Modes of transmitting the element to others within the group:

- Introducing this tool through the media, brochures, photos and other publications.
- Utilizing the experiences of the older generation and transmitting them to their children and apprentices, as well as participating in agricultural work related to the use of the tool.
- The transfer of experiences through artisans houses.

- Concerned organizations if any (associations/civil society organizations, etc.):

Heritage clubs and centres – heritage associations – community heritage fairs and festivals

3. Status of the element: its viability and sustainability

- Threats to the practicing of the element in the context of the relevant community / groups concerned:

Das is still practised in agriculture without threats in agricultural areas.

- Methods of preserving and promoting the element:

By introducing this element through educational institutions and the media, and through heritage festivals and exhibitions.

4. Data: restrictions, and private permissions (collectively and access)

- Group / community approval and involvement in data collection:

There are no objections by the community to the preservation, maintenance, and promotion of this element.

- Restrictions on data access and use:

There are no restrictions on the practice of this element within the framework of the customs and traditions of the individuals and groups practising the element.

- Experts and narrators (their names, position, and affiliation):

A field interview with Rabie Saadoun Zuwaid Al Nuaimi, Souq Al Qattara, 18/01/2016.

Al Hadh Musabbeh Al Kuwaiti, a researcher at the Intangible Heritage Department in Al Ain.

- Dates and locations of data collection:

18/02/2016

5. Sources of information about the element (if any)

- Literature: books, articles, and others:

– Yussef Al Addan, Hands of Gold, Emirates Heritage Club, 1st Edition, 2001, p. 86.

– Faleh Hanthal: Summary of the Emirati Dialect Dictionary in the UAE, p. 208.

- Audio-visual materials, records etc. in archives, museums, and private collections (if any):

There are recordings of the element in some heritage channels and media.
Models of the element can be found in state museums.

- Documentary materials and tools in archives, museums and private collections (if any):

Information and documentary materials about the element are showcased in some heritage books.

6. Data about the inventory process

- The person(s) who performed the classification and collection

Abdul Halim Yassin

- Date the information was entered into the inventory:

18/01/2016

- Pictures:



The uses of the *das*



Production of the *das*

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