

### Element Form

#### 1. Defining the intangible cultural heritage element

- Name of the element as used:

Traditional home furniture

- Other name(s):

/

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

Material culture  
Skills associated with traditional craftsmanship

- Practitioners and groups concerned:

- Craftsmen/craftswomen.
- Carpenters and blacksmiths who produce traditional home furniture
- Traditional furniture merchants.

- Geographical location and range of the element:

In the past, in traditional homes throughout the United Arab Emirates.  
Currently, in museums.

- Brief description of the element:

Detailed description

Most traditional home furniture in the past relied on raw materials that were found in the local desert environment. The Emirati people showcased their advanced skills in making home furniture by utilizing the useful raw materials available in their environment.

**Mandoos** is one of the most important ancient pieces of traditional home furniture. It is a box that is used to store clothes and valuable family items. It is usually made of different types of wood such as teak, ebony or pine, and it has a movable lid with hinges attached in the back. Accordingly, the price and value of a *mandoos* are determined according to the quality of the wood. They are usually decorated with small nails or other patterns made of copper and various other metals. Some are decorated with wooden sculptures and carvings. Sometimes the *mandoos* has four legs to keep it elevated, away from moisture and dampness, and in order to make it easier to clean the floor underneath without having to move it. Some *mandoos*-es have three or four drawers, while others are partitioned from the inside into several compartments that serve different functions. Most *mandoos*-es were imported from India, and a few originated from Zanzibar, Iran and Pakistan, while others were produced in Oman and other areas of the Arabian Gulf.

Another piece of traditional furniture is the “**sahharah**”, which is a metal box that is made in different sizes. It is often decorated with beautiful drawings and engravings with bright colours. It was used in the past to store clothes and household items and was placed in the main room.

**Pillows**, "*mawasid*" are made of fabric and are stuffed with cotton or pieces of cloth, so that they are comfortable. They would also sometimes be stuffed with the small granules of Arak trees, which are commonly found in the UAE. The branches of Arak trees contain small white granules that have a spongy texture. Another important piece of furniture is the **haseer**, which is a wide rug with a

width of about two meters and a length of approximately 5 meters. It is made of thick palm wicker arranged in long symmetrical lines. It is also sometimes made from other trees. In the past, it would be used to cover the floors of rooms in homes as well as the floor of the *manama*. It would also be used in covering the deceased. In addition, people would sit on the *haseer* when in the courtyard. Some types of *haseer* were also used to cover ceilings or protect tents from the rain.

***Semma*** is a large rug made of palm wicker that comes in different sizes, the largest of which may reach approximately 5 meters, such that it is sufficient to cover the floor of a large tent. The *semma* is made of long ribbons that are woven from palm wicker by women and it is decorated in various colours and shapes. A single ribbon is known as a *saffa*. Its width and length are determined according to the type of *semma* to be made. Women then sew it or attach the ribbons with one another using soft palm fronds, which are submerged in water for a period of time until they become soft and flexible. The *semma* is usually used to cover the floors of the home.

Another piece of home furniture is the "***manz***", which is made of palm frond sticks that connected to each other by ropes that are also made of palm fibre to form of a small bed. Children are placed in the *manz* or or are carried while in the *manz* by means of palm fronds. Every traditional home also has a ***durj***, which is a ladder made of tree stems and branches. Each rung is firmly attached with ropes made of palm leaves. There are also shorter varieties of *durj*-es, some of which are just a carved tree stalk. The *durj*, is used to ascend to the *manama*. Its height does not exceed two meters from the ground and is constructed in the yard of the house. A *ghadan* is used to hang clothes to dry. It is a piece of wood that is adjusted in a certain way, such that one end of is attached to the inner side of one of the tent walls, while the other end is attached

to the opposite wall. Clothes, *matarreh*, *saha*, *kharj*, *yaid* and other items are then placed on the *ghadan*.

No traditional house can go without a *zawliyah* or *sijjadah*, which is a rug or rectangular mat that is made of canvas or leather and sometimes woven from goat wool and decorated with beautiful-coloured drawings. Its edges are trimmed, and people can then sit on the *zawliyah* or use it as a blanket in cold weather. It is also used as a prayer rug.<sup>1</sup>

There are many items within the home furnishings that are made by women using palm fronds and decorated with different patterns and bright colours, such as the *mahafa* which is a hand fan that is used to keep cool, and a broom, *makhamma* or *makashah*, which is used as a tool to clean the house and remove dirt. It is known as *assouw*, if it is made from palm branches after harvesting the dates. *Assouw* is used similar to a *makhamma* to clean the house or the *mazrab* "barn". *Jurban* is also made from palm fronds. It is a container of various sizes made from palm fronds in which dates are carried. *jafeer*, *zabeel*, and *quffah* are cylindrical containers in the form of baskets that are made from palm fronds and come in different sizes and shapes according to their use. The most common variety has an opening and is used to carry vegetables or fish from the sea, or dates from palm trees. Some are also used to transport sand that is needed for constructing houses. In addition, there are other products that are made from palm fronds and come in different sizes. They are used for other purposes, including the *mashab* that is used to light and heat a fire, cool down food, especially for children. The *maghtah* or *maghati* is the cover that shields the table from insects. Another product is the *sallah* (basket) which comes with its lid and is normally used for storing clothes and various other items. The *maghmarah* is a basket in which dates are washed

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<sup>1</sup> A field interview with the narrator Aisha Al Rumaithi, a craftswoman at the General Women's Union, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 22/06/2018.

and left to dry, while the *kashouna* is also a long basket in which dates are placed.

*Haban, mandaban, mawress, and obayba* are containers that are made of leather and are used for storing various items, including coffee beans, rice “*aish*”, wheat “*bari*” and other grains and foodstuffs. *Dharf* is a container in which ghee is placed, *jarba* is a water container and *maqras* or *makhadh* is used for churning. *Fanar, salboukh* and *qera’a* are lighting equipment. They are comprised of two stones similar to granite and marble, and either a substance, which is similar to silk and extracted from Calotropis (*ashkhar*) plants, or a cotton wick is placed between them to light the fire. Not only that, copper *qudoor* (pots) are used for cooking, and wooden bowls are used for serving food. Other necessary tools include a number of *khashouqah* "spoons", *mallass* "a long spoon used for stirring food, *raha* which is a grain and *bazar* (spice) mill, as well as coffee *dilal* and *fanajeen* (pots and cups) and tools that are used in making these instruments.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Features of the Element:

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

- Men.
- Carpenters and blacksmiths.
- Traditional housewives.
- Traditional furniture merchants.

- Other participants whose work relates to the element:

- Leather producers.
- Pottery producers.

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<sup>2</sup> An interview with the narrator Ghalwa Salem Al Rumaithi, a craftswoman at the Heritage Club, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates - 12/07/2018.

- Craftswomen.
- Ropes, threads, and knitting needle producers.

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

- Dialects that are used in the rhymes and songs that are recited while practising the trade.
- Local dialects used for local terms and nomenclature of tools and instruments.

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

- Tools and equipment: wood, iron, ropes, threads, long knitting needles,
- Spaces where the element is practised mostly include areas near traditional homes and markets.

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

- Practitioners of the element chant rhymes and songs that are unique to every industry or craft.
- They also recite stories and anecdotes about the element, especially while training the new generation.

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

Customary practices include cooperation between group members to complete the necessary work, the exchange of roles and classification of the work according to its priority as well as the members' experiences in order to complete the work satisfactorily.

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

- Skills are transmitted through the education provided by parents to their sons and daughters.
- Skills are transmitted through school curricula that contain relevant information.
- Training offered in training centres for those interested.
- Training during summer camps for schoolchildren.
- Training offered in scout organization camps.
- Training in heritage centres and villages throughout the UAE.

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

- Organizers of heritage festivals and exhibitions.
- Public and private museums.
- University colleges concerned with heritage.
- Heritage institutions and employees in the fields of heritage.
- Merchants who see traditional home equipment and instruments.

### 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:

- There are threats facing old tools and instruments, as they have been replaced by other modern tools.
- The availability of products from different countries, which are sometimes are less expensive.
- Many easy and quick to use electrical tools and devices are widely available.

- Data: restrictions, and private permissions (collectively and access)

- All groups of equestrian practitioners are welcome and cooperate by supplying data and information.

- Group / community approval and involvement in data collection:

There are no restrictions on the element. All groups concerned with the element have agreed to provide information regarding the element. Some of these groups have also participated and are involved in data collection.

- Restrictions on data access and use:

- There are no restrictions on data access and use.

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

1- 22/06/2018 – A field interview with the narrator Aisha Al Rumaithi, General Women's Union, Abu Dhabi.

2- 12/07/2018 – An interview with the narrator Ghalwa Salem Al Rumaithi, a craftswoman at the Heritage Club, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

- Dates and locations of data collection:

- 22/06/2018 – A field interview with the narrator Aisha Al Rumaithi, General Women's Union, Abu Dhabi.

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

- Literature: books, articles, and others:

-<http://forum.kooora.com/f.aspx?t=2304206>.

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



There are audio-visual materials and records of the element in archives, museums, and private collections

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

- Recordings that were transcribed following the field interviews.
- Numerous old traditional furniture models found in public museums.

#### 6. Data about the inventory process

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

Researcher Mahasin Abdul Rahim Waqee Allah

- Date the information was entered into the inventory:

- 26/06/2018
- 11/04/2020

- Pictures:

#### Material Culture and Folk Arts



*Mahafa*



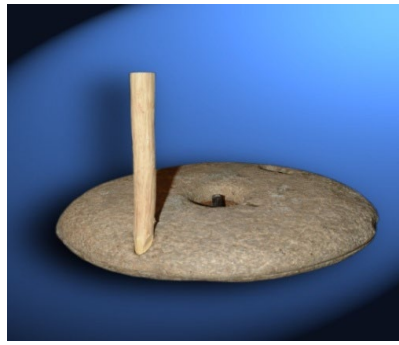
*Semma*



*Sahharah*



*Maghati*



*Raha*

Date created: 26/06/2018

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Username: Researcher Mahasin Abdul Rahim Waqee Allah

Archive: