

Element Form

1. Defining the intangible cultural heritage element

- Name of the element as used:

Al Raha

- Other name:

Tarsha

- Short and useful title of the intangible cultural heritage element (Including domain(s) of cultural heritage manifested by the element):

Skills associated with traditional craftsmanship – Household equipment (*raha*) making

- Practitioners and groups concerned:

- Craftsmen who make the element.
- Women and men who utilise the element.
- Dealers of household equipment and tools.

- Geographical location and range of the intangible cultural heritage element:

All regions of the United Arab Emirates.

- Brief description of the intangible cultural heritage element (Not to exceed 200 characters):

Raha (Millstones) one of the most important tools in the traditional Emirati kitchen, which is usually located in one corner of the house away from the living rooms and places of rest. Emirati kitchens were distinguished by their small size and would contain the tools

and utensils that are used in preparing and serving food, and storing food supplies, such as dates, flour, etc.¹

Usually, women would start their day in the early morning using the *raha*, which is a primitive device made of heavy, coarse stone that is used for crushing and grinding grains. It consists of two round stones on top of each other, so that the lower stone is smaller than the upper stone, allowing the ground flour to come out from the bottom. The *raha* is a fixed immobile device, which has a narrow hole in its middle, allowing the passage of a wooden or metal axis that is fixed in its middle, called the *raha* pole. The upper part of the *raha* moves and its rotation leads to the grinding and crushing of grains. It has a relatively large hole in the middle that allows easy placement of the grains. There is another small hole at its end in which the wooden handle is placed which is used to move the *raha*. In addition, the *raha* includes the “butterfly”, which is rectangular piece of wood similar to a butterfly spindle, along with a hole in the middle that is used to hold the wooden or iron axis and fix it so that it does not budge. The “butterfly” is fixed at the opening of the upper stone of the *raha*. “*Hadl*” is a piece of wood in the form of a small stick that is attached to the side hole to form the handle with which the upper stone of the *raha* is turned. A piece of cloth is sometimes wrapped around the *hadi* so as not to injure the hands. The “*qutb*” (pole) is the wooden or metal axis around which the *raha* revolves. “*Lahwa*” it is the small handful of grains that are successively placed inside the *raha* hole for grinding. This is known as “*luhwa* of wheat”, which is referenced as the “*lahwa*” being large or small, or less than a *hafna* (handful). A handful of grain is called *hafna*. A *lahwa* is roughly half a *hafna*. The “*thifal*” is piece of woven sheep’s wool and goat fur, placed under the *raha*, so that the flour and crushed grains fall on it. The fineness of the grains can be controlled depending on what traditional dishes the grains will be used for, such as *harees*, *asida* or and *khabees*. The use of the *raha* is not limited to making flour only,

¹ Yussef Al Addan, Hands of Gold: Traditional Handicrafts and Industries in the United Arab Emirates, Emirates Heritage Club, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 2001, p. 29.

but it can also be used to coarsely grind wheat to make *garish*. It can also be used to coarsely grind lentils, which is used in other delicious traditional dishes.

One woman cannot move the large *raha* "*tarsha*" by herself due to its heavy weight, so usually two women do so together. Because women usually sit for long periods with this tool, a strong relationship has been established between them and the *raha*. In addition, during the *raha* milling process, women would exchange folk tales and stories, and compete in telling poetry, riddles and proverbs, and chanting songs. They also made sure that young girls are involved by teaching them the skills of using the *raha* to grind grains.²

2. Features of the Element:

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

- Housewives.
- Girls who are able to assist their mothers.

- Other participants whose work relates to the element and contributes to sustaining its practice or facilitates the performance and transmission of the element (including those who attend a performance or those who are responsible for training, supervision or sponsorships):

- Dealers of household equipment and tools.
- Stone tool makers.
- Carpenters
- Food grain merchants.

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

Local dialects associated with local terms and nomenclature of household tools and equipment.

² A field interview with the narrator/ Moza Nasser, Sweihan, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 21/07/2010.

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

wood – stone used in making *raha* – tools accompanying the *raha* – grains – pieces of leather – the piece of cloth with which the crushed materials are collected

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

- Sharing news, anecdotes and folk stories while grinding the grain.
- Exchanging proverbs and riddles and chanting poems and songs.

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

- There are no restrictions, laws or regulations preventing access to practitioners from accessing data about the element.

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

- Skills are transmitted through guided learning from mothers to their daughters.
- It is transmitted through observation and participation during the milling process using the *raha*.
- Summer camps and scout association camps.
- Training courses in craftsmen's homes.

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

- Clubs and heritage villages.
- Artisans centres
- Heritage societies

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:

- The element is still practiced in some Bedouin and rural areas in the context of the relevant groups concerned

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

- Group / community approval and involvement in data collection:

- Groups, communities and individuals have been involved and have expressed complete approval in providing data about the element.
- Women have also contributed by providing additional data about the special skills associated with using the *raha*.

- Restrictions on data access and use

- There are no restrictions on data access.
- Women refrain from appearing in front of the camera in accordance with societal traditions.

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

A field interview with the narrator/ Moza Nasser, Sweihan, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 21/07/2010.

- Dates and locations of data collection:

21/07/2010.

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

- Literature: books, articles, and others:

- Yussef Al Addan, Hands of Gold: Traditional Handicrafts and Industries in the United Arab Emirates, Emirates Heritage Club, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 2001, p. 29.

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

There are transcribed recordings of the interview in the archives.

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

Documentary materials and tools can be found in archives and museums.

6. Data about the inventory process

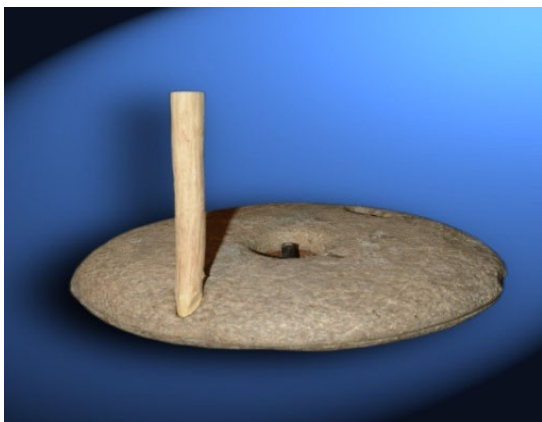
- The person(s) who performed the classification and collection

Researcher Mahasin Abdul Rahim Waqee Allah

- Date the information was entered into the inventory:

25/07/2010

- Pictures:



Raha

Date created: 25/07/2010

Date updated: 13/10/2020