

Element Form

1. Defining the intangible cultural heritage element

- Name of the element as used:

Al Saj

- Other name:

Al Toubi

- 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 – Cooking and serving tools.

- Practitioners and groups concerned:

- Men
- Women

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

- In the past: All regions of the United Arab Emirates.
- Recently: In rural areas.

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

Saj or *toubi*, as it is sometimes called in the UAE, is an important tool in the traditional Emirati home. It is a single piece of iron or aluminium that comes in

different sizes and according to preference. It is usually circular with a diameter of 45 cm, and a thickness of around 1 cm. The *saj* may also include handles that are made of the same raw material, which makes it easy to carry and move from one place to another. *Saj* is specifically built for making *raqaq* bread, which is a traditional Emirati dish, consumed especially in Ramadan as well as winter.¹

Stones are usually placed over the *saj* that raise it above the level of the stove and the materials used to start the fire until the *saj* heats up. When making *raqaq* bread, the special *raqaq* dough is prepared, then placed on the *saj* and levelled with a small piece of wood or with the palm of the hand until the bread is cooked. It is eaten fresh and is also used in the preparation of many popular dishes.

2. Features of the Element:

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

Women (housewives)

- 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):

- Vendors of household items.
- Iron or aluminium *saj* producers.
- Grain merchants.

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

- The local Emirati dialects used in the nomenclature and phrases associated with household items.

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.

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

- Tools: iron – aluminium – stones – fire – pieces of wood – other fuel materials.
- Spaces: traditional homes – traditional markets – heritage festivals and fairs – craftswomen's houses.

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

- Sharing news, tales and folk stories while using the traditional *saj*.
- Exchanging proverbs and riddles, reciting poetry and songs

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

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

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

- Guided instruction provided by mothers to young girls about the use of the traditional *saj*.
- Participation through observation when using the traditional *saj*.
- Summer camps, scout association camps.

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

- Heritage societies
- Artisans houses
- Productive Families
- Heritage clubs and villages.

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 traditional *saj* still has many uses both within the Emirati household and traditional restaurants.

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

- Group / community approval and involvement in data collection:

- Groups, communities and individuals have fully cooperated in providing data related to the element.
- Women have assisted the researchers by providing data about the special skills associated with using the *saj*.

- Restrictions on data access and use

- There are no restrictions on accessing data related to the element.

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

- A field interview with the narrator Moza Naser Al Merri, Al Rahba City, Emirate of 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 audio recordings of the interview with the narrator.

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

- There are documentary materials and traditional household tools in archives, museums, and private collections.

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:



Date created: 25/07/2020

Date updated: 04/10/2020