



Element Form

1. Defining the intangible cultural heritage element

- Name of the element as used:

Jallaf

- Other name

Oustad, gallaf

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

Traditional craftsmanship related to *jallaf*.

- Practitioners and groups concerned:

Male members of the maritime community with experience in shipbuilding.

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

This craft is practiced primarily by the people of the sea, who live on the islands and coastal plains.

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

Shipbuilding is one of the industries that grew famous in the UAE and the Arab Gulf states. It constituted a good resource for its owners, and although not as common now, it is a maritime heritage that the people of the UAE are proud of.

The traditional shipbuilding industry was known as “*qallafah*”, pronounced “*jallafah*”, and the shipbuilder was called “*qallaʔ*” “*jallaʔ*”. It is one of the oldest professions in the UAE. Shipbuilding is considered a difficult profession, as a single ship would be pronounced by a number of craftsmen involved in the carpentry process and the manufacture of the various ship parts.¹

Since ancient times, the inhabitants of the United Arab have utilized to contact neighbouring countries for trade, livelihood and diving, which is why the need to manufacture ships arose. Children would inherit these skills from their ancestors, maintain their secrets and innovate in making them. A lot of men were famous for their ship making skills in all regions of the countries.²

Jallafa remains one of the oldest professions in the country. It specifically means tying pieces of wood with ropes or sewing wooden boards similar to how cloth is sewn. This is the historical concept of *qallafah*, as the modern method is different in that iron nails are used instead of the sewing or tying methods in which the fibres of a certain type of tree, coconut trees, were used.³

The ship building crew consists of:

Oustad: the head of the *jallaʔs*, and the most experienced and knowledgeable. He is the engineer of the ship, the supervisor and overseer of all stages of construction, the person who agrees on the construction of the ship with the owner, and pays the wages of the *jallaʔs*. Deputy *Oustad*: the person immediately beneath the *Oustad* in terms of experience and rank. He supervises the *jallaʔs* and the work in the absence of the *Oustad*, The *shalamen* supervisor: is the *jallaʔ* who trims the boards of the ship. The nailer: a *jallaʔ* who is entrusted with the task of striking nails and hammering them into the body and structure of the boards of the ship. Some of these *jallaʔs* are distinguished by the fact that when hammering the nails, they can strike in harmonic and harmonious movements, which produces beautiful and vibrant melodies that the

¹ Al Dhafra Magazine, Issue 10, Friday, 23 Muharram 1429 AH - 1 February 2008.

² Emirates News Agency report, Wooden Ships Industry, 20/12/2013.

³ Hamdi Tamam, Zayed Encyclopaedia, Vol Two, UAE and Heritage, Abu Dhabi, 2nd Edition, 1992, p. 29.

rest of the *jallafs* and those overseeing the construction of the ship find delightful. *Jallaf kalafat*: (*jalafat* or *qulafat*): performs the task of *kalafat*, which means inserting wicks of grease-saturated cotton between the spaces of the ship's boards to prevent water from seeping into it. This work is mastered by all *jallafs* because of its importance and need in the majority of ships. *Jalaf shaqq*: The one who is assigned the task of splitting the panels. He must be characterized by precision, balance and visual acuity, so that he does not make mistakes that lead to the cracking of the panels and the loss of their value. Sometimes two men participate in cutting huge pieces of wood, and use a two-handed saw. Worker: a man who helps the *jallafs* in fetching them their *jallafa* tools, cleans the construction site, and fulfils the *jallafs'* requests in fetching some tools and equipment from outside the workshop. *Waleed*: A boy less than 10 years of age who provides the *jallafs* with their *jallafa* tools, in exchange for learning the profession, and remains until he has either mastered the profession or decides to withdraw from it. The cook: a man who provides for the workshop workers, especially breakfast and lunch. ⁴

In addition, there are attributes known to the people of the sea that the *jallaf* must have, including cleanliness while working and the credibility that governs the relationships and dealings between merchants and dealers, in addition to taking weights and measures into consideration to ensure a high-quality final product. The *qallafs* has excelled in building ships of various shapes, types and specifications relying on the experience gained and accumulated over the years. The *qallafa* profession is considered one of the most difficult professions, as it is an arduous profession that requires great physical effort.⁵

The *qallaf's* work begins at the end of the diving season, when divers return to rest, and the work of the *qallaf* begins. The ships are pulled to the shores, work begins on them, including repairs, restorations and renovations. The relationships among shipbuilders have been governed since ancient times by

⁴ Emaratalyoum Newspaper, 25 / September / 2012.

⁵ Emirates News Agency report, Constructing Wooden Ships, 20/12/2013.

specific traditions and customs that regulate the ways they deal with one another.⁶

2. Features of the Element:

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

Men with shipbuilding experience.

- 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):

Oustad, deputy *oustad*, *shalamen* supervisor, nailer, *jallaf kalafat*, *jalaf shaqaq*, worker, *walid*, cook.

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

The local dialect is used for communication among sailors, and in folk songs and tales during work.

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

The tools necessary to practice this industry such as: wood, nails, dyes, saws, oils, including whale fat, and ropes.

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

Sea folk songs to encourage and motivate craftsmen to complete their work.

⁶ Hamdi Tammam, Zayed Encyclopaedia, Vol Two, UAE and Heritage, Abu Dhabi, 2nd Edition, 1992, p. 28.

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

Shipbuilding operations are governed by the customs and traditions of the people of the sea, as well as by laws and regulations governing the relationship between seamen and *gallafs*, including mastery of work and completion of work on time.

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

Relevant skills are transmitted from parents and experienced people to their children, grandchildren, and trainees, in addition through the courses organized by the fishermen associations and some official bodies in order to preserve this industry and prevent it from dissipating.

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

Department of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Culture and Youth, Heritage Associations and Clubs, Fishermen's Associations.

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:

- Most of the current practitioners are elderly
- Lack of interest by youth and their involvement in administrative and educational work
- The difficulty of this profession as it requires extensive physical effort, which has led to few practitioners
- Appearance of many modern ships

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

- Group / community approval and involvement in data collection:

Narrators and informants who have knowledge, information, and practices about the element have reacted positively.

- Restrictions on data access and use

There are no restrictions on accessing data related to this element.

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

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- Dates and locations of data collection:

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

- Literature: books, articles, and others:

- Hamdi Tammam, Zayed Encyclopaedia, Vol Two, UAE and Heritage, Abu Dhabi, 2nd Edition, 1992.
- Al Bayan Newspaper, 15 / February / 2014.
- Emaratalyoum Newspaper, 25 / September / 2012.
- Emirates News Agency report, Constructing Wooden Ships, 20/12/2013.
- Al Dhafra Magazine, Issue 10, Friday, 23 Muharram 1429 AH – 1 February 2008.

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

There are some media recordings of the shipbuilding industry and the role of the *qallaf*.

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

There are some books that document the profession as part of the traditional crafts.

6. Data about the inventory process

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

Ruqaya Subaih Khamis Saeed Al Kaabi.

- Date the information was entered into the inventory:

07/05/2015

- Pictures:



A ship construction site ⁽⁷⁾

⁽⁷⁾ Pictures from the Public Arts & Rowing Association



A ship in its manufacturing stages. ⁽⁸⁾

Date created: 07/05/2015

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Username: Ruqaya Subaih Khamis Saeed Al Kaabi.

⁽⁸⁾ Al Bayan Newspaper, 15 / February / 2014.