

# Social Values

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مركز حمدان بن محمد لإحياء التراث  
HAMDAN BIN MOHAMMED HERITAGE CENTER

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Collected, prepared and presented by

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# Foreword





The attention that the UAE pays to the preservation and protection of cultural heritage is based on the vision of the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan. His words have remained a guide and an approach for us: "A nation that does not know its past has neither a present nor a future ". His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan - President of the UAE - and his brother His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum - Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, may Allah protect them, followed the same wise approach.

Undoubtedly, the advance country is the one that invests in its heritage and uses it to serve its future. It is the main impetus for culture in any country and the first step in the societies' journey towards the present and the future.

We are in a country that has a great cultural heritage that forms a solid foundation. It is inspired by the values passed down from parents to children. It has developed its identity from generation to generation. This has enabled us to move forward firmly and confidently in our development and to achieve success time and again on our path of human development.

As we are in a ceaseless race with the world to reach the top, we believe in two important pillars in the path of competitiveness that should be developed in parallel. These are : Arming the youth with education and knowledge and preserving Emirati identity.

**Yours sincerely,**



**Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum**

# Preface



## **Dear Readers,**

Social values, morals and culture differ in different societies and have a direct influence on their progress. Hence, we find the differences among the peoples of the world and the inequality in their development. Some societies are ahead of others in their development and the speed of their adaptation to and integration with other cultures without any impact. All this has been associated with two main factors, namely the natural geographical factor and the components on which the resources of life are based. From this point of view, the social values of the Emirates are the backbone for building a strong, flexible society that is able to coexist and integrate with all cultures of the world.

Today, the Hamdan Bin Mohammed Heritage Center (HHC) is proud to publish the book 'Social Values' by H.E. Abdullah Hamdan Bin Dalmook, CEO of HHC. The book highlights the pillars and symbols of UAE heritage and its massive and firm importance in the society from generation to generation.

The four pillars without which there would be no life in this country are: Camels (Al-Boush), Cattle (Al-Halal), Ships (Al-Mehmal) and Date Palms (Al-Nakhlah). These four pillars are connected to other elements that are not part of the pillars of heritage, but are no less important. These elements are Al Teir 'falcon', which is the emblem of the country; Al-Derour, a traditional method of prediction that is important for the seasons in agriculture and hunting as well as other aspects of life; Al Khail 'horse', a symbol of pride and dignity; and finally, the Al Makanat 'places' that form the diverse and rich geographical map of the UAE.

These are the pillars and elements that are part of the UAE's great identity, heritage and history.



# Thanks, and Appreciation



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## ◇ **Photo in Page:**

14,23: Abdullah Mohammad Al Ramsi  
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(During the 2018 Camel Cultural trip of the HHC)



# Index



|                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| Foreword                 | 6  |
| Preface                  | 8  |
| Thanks, and Appreciation | 10 |
| Al Bush 'Camels'         | 14 |
| Al Halal 'Cattle'        | 26 |
| Al Mehmal 'Ships'        | 38 |
| Al Nakhlah 'Palm'        | 52 |

Al Khail ‘Horse’ 62

Al Teir ‘Falcon’ 70

Al Droor ‘A traditional forecast method’ 84

Al Mekanat ‘Places’ 96

Conclusion 104

Biography and Journey 106



A close-up photograph of a camel's head, showing its brown fur and a metal chain collar. The chain is attached to a green and red striped cloth. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape.

# Al Bush 'Camels'



# Al Bush 'Camels'



According to our information and our experience with the tradition and the social aspect of the societies in the Arabian Gulf States, I have found that there are four main components that have ensured the continuity of life in this region, namely ships, the camels (the ride), and then the cattle, which the people here call (al-Housh), and the last one is the palm tree. These are the four key components. Even our proverbs, our stories, and other things are derived from these components. If we want to use a specific description, for example, to talk about someone who found a reason to flee, we are inspired by the life of the camel and how it conducts itself in some of its affairs. A camel would jump at the chance to descend faster downhill. It is faster to go downhill than it is to run normally on a straight path. Similarly, when a person hurries to escape a place or situation. People express this by saying (a runner who found a slope) or (a runner who found a downhill). Today, many of our sayings and affairs are based on these four components. We may consider only these four: palm trees, ships, cattle, and camel or the she-camel as the main four pillars. If we want to talk about the camel, without this animal that God has given us and placed in this part of the earth, life would indeed be unbearable and difficult. No one could walk and move without this living being. This is the truth, and it is a pillar of national identity or tradition, without which life in this region would never have continued. For example, people in this region use donkeys, but donkeys can only walk much. They certainly have a limit in terms of distance and effort, and so do horses, but camels have no limit. If you wanted it in the

mountains, it would walk, and if you wanted it in the deserts, it would walk. If you wanted her in hard land, she would walk. If you wanted it in prosperity, it would walk on soft land, and likewise in the heat and in the cold. The camel rarely gets sick and is very beneficial. If you look at it, you will see it as a symbol of the heritage of the United Arab Emirates. We are speaking here only of the emirates, not of the neighboring countries. The she-camels used to carry our people, transport them, and work to protect them. They carried a lot for them, accompanied them, fed them, helped them drink, traded with them, and worked hard for them. She carried the world on her head and never complained, despite her size. Her birth is hard, and it takes a long time to take care of her, but by the grace of God Almighty, her birth was made easier. Everything about her is useful. All of it is grace. Our ancestors said that it was created from fire. Therefore, you are told that when you eat camel meat, you must perform ablution, and if you have performed ablution, you must perform ablution again. Camels walk in an unusual way, they cross long roads. If you have a camel, it's like you own a fleet of cars or a tanker or one of those trucks that carry a lot of items and you travel by it. When a problem arises and life becomes barren, the camel is patient with the lack of water, and no other can bear it. It reaches the water where you expect it, it arrives without harm. Suppose we are here today and the water is in Iraq the camel can walk from here to Iraq without drinking. It has no problems, it does not hurt it. It eats weeds from the ground as it walks because it is an unusual creature. It accompanied our ancestors even before the message of Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, was sent down. It accompanied them and lived with them in peace and war. They carried their needs on their back and transported their wives, their houses and their belongings. This camel

is one of the symbols of this heritage in the United Arab Emirates. We are proud of the she-camel and its origin and we even know her lineage. We say it is the daughter of so-and-so, the son of so-and-so, the son of so-and-so. The names of the camels we all know are breeds that are not lost. They remain from the times of Adam. This is one of the most beautiful things that make us proud of camels and make us happy with them. For example, if we hear that a camel was sold for eight million and Sheikh so-and-so bought it and had it mate with other camels, female ones, to improve production if it is a fast camel for racing, or has good form, if it is of good lineage, then that's a beautiful thing. Some may criticize that, but I think they criticize themselves, because the camel and the she-camel are a symbol of our heritage, a symbol of our life, just as water is necessary, so is the she-camel and the camel. Without them we would not be and could not live in this part of earth. All of our people would have died. How will they move in this land? The sea cannot take them to those places they have gone to. The land is their life. They go and come in it. How will they go and move in the desert without a camel? That is why we are always proud when we hear that the camel's price has reached that extent. We are proud that our country made these competitions and races for camels and encouraged people to breed cattle and camels. These camels, which form a valuable part of our national heritage, even if we are half townsmen and half Bedouins. Some of us do not even know how to look after camels, but they remain a symbol of this nation. I may not know about falcons, for example, but the falcon remains the country's emblem. Every one of us belongs to that emblem, even if I do not know how to take care of falcons. I belong to it anyway. We citizens are not all engineers, but we have engineers whom we value. When it comes to camels, it is not necessary that we can all

take care of them, but we all value camels. We all know that camels are pride, dignity, a symbol and identity. If we can find an opportunity to practice hobbies with camels, that is a good thing. If we cannot find it in ourselves, then we should value them. This is actually the weakest faith i.e. the least we can do. None of us should make fun of hearing that a she-camel or a camel is being sold at auction for a high price, because we do not accept that, and we should not do that. The person who makes fun of it should know that camels are one of the symbols of our nation and you should be proud of them as you are of your father and mother. The services that camels provided to our ancestors are great services. They lived and provided for a nation and protected a nation that traveled great distances. How many people rode camels, how many defended the oppressed, how many brought back plundered cattle, how many joined with others, and how many distances they traveled. For example, how did they travel the road from Dubai to Al Ain? It is a long road, not easily travelled. There were no cars. They were travelling by camels. By camels the mother reached her son. The camels brought the boy to his mother. They brought the parents, they connected the relatives. For example, if my sister gets married in Al Ain or Abu Dhabi, how am I going to reach her if I do not have a camel? How will I get there? The ship will take me to the coast, but how will I get from the coast in Abu Dhabi to Al-Ain or the western region? If I do not have a camel that can take me to my mother, father, grandfather, uncle, aunt or children, who will take me to them? No one but this camel. The camel in general is a symbol of the society of this good nation. We must respect that, even if we do not know how to take care of them. If we wanted to talk about camels, a whole day would not be enough for us. I myself would say that if there are festivals at which cattle are slaughtered, I think it is

possible at these festivals to slaughter a camel for all the people. Camel meat benefits many people who work to raise camels. The government will help with that if people buy these camels. Thank God we have a big market for camels these days, but it's nice to find camels everywhere. Whoever puts a camel barn in front of their door values them. I came to a neighborhood for sheikhs and found a man who had a small house and put a camel barn in front of his house, and nobody resented him for it, because it is one of our symbols. Nobody blames you for that. In the past, our early Sheikhs, may God have mercy on them and forgive them, Sheikh Zayed, may God have mercy on him, and Sheikh Rashid, may God have mercy on him, met at camel races, as did all the rulers of the Emirates at the annual camel race. This is a good thing, and we hope that these meetings and gatherings will recur. We would like them to meet again at camel races and horse races.

Our early sheikhs did not ignore this. We appreciate and rejoice in their attention to this tradition. If it were not of value to them, they would not have supported it. If it was not a symbol, they would not have sat on the ground for it. It is because of their value, their dignity and their pride that frightens the enemies in the old time. It is a sound equipment and I believe that the one who owns camels is higher than others. The camel is a symbol of heritage in the Emirates and we all need to preserve this heritage, whether it is the one who has camels or the one who does not have camels. The one who does not have camels must be part of this heritage. He should not make fun of spending too much on them. He must not make fun of it. It is a great honor to be proud of that heritage, to be the owner of a camel. It is a great value. The early ones were proud of that. They are proud that they are owners of camels, meaning that is a symbol for them, and that remains until God wills. All our peoples

are proud of this heritage, for example, the tribe of Al-Awamir. They are spread in Oman and in our country and in other neighboring countries, but those between Oman and the Emirates are cousins. Many of them are Omani and many of them are Emirati and they are mixed. If you call one of them or if he shows his pride, he would say Rai Farha (owner of joy). Joy is a breed of camel, a she- camel called Farha. He is proud of them, and our family says Ra'i Boayda (shepherd/owner of Boayda). Boayda is a she- camel. When you talk to him, you say to him, for example, (shepherd of Boayda). He is proud of it, and we are proud of camels and their names. One of us says with pride, (I am your son and I am the brother of Muhammad, the brother of Ahmed, the brother of Saeed). They are proud of their brothers. Men cherish their fathers, so they cherish their camels and their names. One man says I am the shepherd of Boayda, and another says I am the shepherd of Joy, while another says I am a shepherd of Rahma. Each of them cherished their camels, especially in the days of the first wars when they went out and invaded. They were proud of their camels. If they found a fast camel, his esteem would be more among them, and if they found a camel that was highly mentioned by the people, it was a beautiful thing, as if it had come down from heaven. Camels had great value among us and we love the one who love and cares for them. It has been proven in all studies that handling and caring for camels leads to higher ranks than what is expected of them socially and financially, but we are talking about the social aspect here, about how close they are to people. The camel knows its owner and knows where it is. When summer comes, our ancestors release the camels and let them go for six, seven or eight months before winter. When (Isfari) comes, the camels will return one by one. What is this creature that you release and then it returns to you? It will not

return to its first place if you buy a small camel or something else from a man and then it settles down with you and eats. It will leave and then return to you. Not all animals do this, such as pigeons. Camels return to you with kindness and longing. They know you among sixty people. You are their owner. When the owner changes, they get to know their new owner, because there is a spirit of kindness and it pays to be good to them. Camels are chivalrous. They know their owner, with whom they ate with. They have many beautiful temperaments. It is said that the camel has a grudge against you. If you beat it, it will come back and beat you. There are many stories about this, but in reality, the camel raises its children. It longs for them. They have beautiful things, sweet qualities that you love. Unlike some other animals, they have a good soul. One man had a camel that gave birth to a baby camel, which was not suitable for racing, and this man is the owner of camel races. When he saw that this little camel was not fit to walk, he gave him to the slaughterhouse to sell his meat so that he might not





come short in the races and profit by it, for he eats a great deal. When they carried the baby on the truck and took it to the slaughterhouse and its mother saw it while it was tied up before sunset, the truck went away and they came back to feed the camels and entered the farm and did not find the mother camel. They found that it had gone north to Sharjah where the slaughterhouse is located. At that time, they started to prepare the road leading to the university in Sharjah, and we are in the area of Al Khawaneej in Dubai, so the camel ran until it was found dead in the road. She ran until she died behind the truck that her son was in, and the owner of the truck does not know. There is a method we use in such cases. We isolate the camels and take them away when we want to take their child away from them, because if she saw it being taken away from her, she would be just as hurt as the she-camel that followed her son and then died. The sentiments of camels are beautiful and not found in all animals. Camels have a special status among our ancestors. They love them in an unnatural way. They care for them, perhaps more than they care for their children. How many times have they slept beside them when they got sick...? Their value is not equal to anything owned by the Bedouins, for the Bedouins used to depend upon them for their subsistence when there was not much money. Camels are valued by our people because they take them to far away places. Today, as development spread and governments supported the people, they set up special markets for camels and we were able to support ourselves, but they kept close to camels and continued to be cared for. Camels are a symbol of our heritage, no less. than any other symbol in folklore. So I hope I have managed to convey even one simple thing about this creature, this faithful creature that has helped us through all these years

and has been a major reason why life in this region continues to this day. I pray to God that we may preserve and develop the whole heritage, and we hope, God willing, that all these things will be preserved. Please forgive me if I have fallen short or omitted a word. May Allah reward you with good.





# Al Halal 'Cattle'



# Al Halal 'Cattle'



Cattle, al-halal, in the UAE are of paramount importance for the country's heritage and national identity. Based on what we know, the UAE's heritage comprises four pillars, the Mehmam, the 9(ships), the palm tree, Al-Boush, the (camels), and finally the Al-Housh, the (cattle). Cattle are not less important than the other pillars, neither the camels nor the ship or palm tree. They are equal. Cattle are also equal to the other pillars. Everything can be changed and replaced. Even a falcon, the emblem of the state, can be replaced. It is not one of the four key pillars, but it is part of our emblem. Cattle are one of the four pillars, a component that have enabled us to live in this region, without which our ancestors would not have been able to inhabit this land to this day. The whole gulf is cattle herders. We are Bedouin herders, even though we have city dwellers. Our life is Bedouin in nature. Our veins are Bedouin. The land is originally from Bani Yas, our tribe. We are Bani Yas people. Where is Bani Yas located? In Gharbia (Western Region), in Liwa, in the middle of the country, in the middle of the desert. Anyone can get lost there. Before the honorable message was sent to the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, we were already in this area, a tribe whose veins rooted in this island. Our first work was herding sheep. Some of us lived on the land or the coast and stayed there, while others stayed on the land and moved back and forth. The government of these days, may God reward them, having seen our great interest in cattle, gave people lands for cattle farms. It allocated vast areas that were divided among people. The government did not stop people from

raising cattle, because that is impossible. It has known that a Gulf state must raise cattle. If someone does not have cattle, he must honor his guest so he has to go to the market to buy a goat for his guest because of their generosity. Even the honorable Messengers did so because of their honor. The Holy Quran mentions that Prophet Abraham, peace be upon him, when a group of men (they were angels) came to him and passed by him, he recognized them. He welcomed them and brought a fat grilled calf to honor them. He did not bring them coffee as we would today. Coffee is a new thing and the custom in the past was to serve meat, a goat. Livestock or cattle have a long-standing origin in our tradition. We are attached to that. One goat differs from another in the sense that the one who honors you when he slaughters a goat tells you it is from his own cattle and not from the market; because your value is precious to him because you are dear to his heart. Cattle was a sign of honor. In marriage, you slaughter cattle for the bride's family, and these days he who does not work cannot get married. If you do not have a family, there's no problem, but if you have livestock, you are adequately provided for, and even today people make a living buying and selling livestock. The livestock market is thriving, especially since religion urges us to do so, and that is through Eid sacrifices. I know someone who did not have an 'izba', i.e. cattle farm. He takes care of them in his home, so his neighbors and brothers were bothered by the smell of the cattle, so he distributed the cattle to others. Two months later, he was bothered by the loss of his cattle, so he went to the market to buy some again. He found a woman selling goats with their young ones, so he bought them and brought the cattle to his house. His neighbors blamed him but he replied 'I could not live without cattle'. He was not even a Bedouin. None of us, then, can give up cattle-raising. When a guest comes to you, you will slaughter it

for him, for cattle are in our blood, and the honor of the people rests on them. When we used to talk to our family and say to them, this goat (God honor you, ie. as if the goat was an inferior being), they were not pleased with us saying that, so they scolded us and said how can we say (may God honor you) about the goat, how can you say that about a goat or a cow, you say (may God honor you) about the donkey, and they say that about the dog, but they do not say that about the cattle. They get upset when you say it. They think that the cattle are your life and it is the one that gives you honor. You drink its milk, you eat its meat, you eat its fat and butter, you break your fast with its goodness. You drink their milk in the morning, so how can you say (may God honor you) when you mention them. Cattle were an important thing in the past. Just as we used the date palm, we used the cattle or livestock. They used all of it, the meat they eat and the milk they drink and made cheese from it. Goat's milk has more fat than cow's milk and cow's milk have more fat than camel's milk. Even cattle manure is very useful for agriculture. It is better than cow dung (May God honor you) (Honor you over dung). This means that our life is connected with the cattle, socially connected with generosity, because you give it to the people.

As for males, men seek them out and take them to mate with the females whom they possess. When they find a stallion or a fit male, they take him with them for a month. They marry him off to the females of their livestock. The people are content with this and consider it charity for the livestock that breed for them or among them. People believe that if you have a male bovine, bull or camel, your permission to have it borrowed for mating is a substantial reward. This makes them happy. If a guest came to them and was in a hurry and could not stay to have lunch or dinner with them, they would send a goat or a Billy goat to his house in

his honor, or they would put it in his car as a gift. That is something we see that shows the value of the people who visit us. We saw this in our ancestors. May God have mercy on them, and their children who came after them, and we met them. Honoring them is a big deal, especially when someone says, 'I am the son of so and so.' This happens you saw his father one day honoring people in the way we mentioned, and that's enough. That's something that strengthens social cohesion. One day I went to the western region to visit someone who honored me greatly. When I returned, every time someone mentioned the Western Region to me, I said wonderful things about them because of the generosity I found among them. For example, if I went to the Shaam area in Ras Al Khaimah and visited a man in his house who honored me the same way I mentioned, i.e. he gave me a goat or a Billy goat, whenever someone asked me about the people of Sha'am afterwards, I would praise them in the highest terms and say that they are second to none. These are among the beautiful things of heritage that reinforce belonging to this land. Cattle are not only for eating, but for many things. The owner of cattle or livestock commands great respect. If you come to a man and find he owns a lot of cattle, for example, a thousand sheep, that would be a great thing. If you pass by a valley that is full of cattle and you are asked who owns it, and you say, 'So and so,' people say (Mashallah) (God be praised). People pray for blessings because owning cattle makes you honorable. If you own a lot of cattle, you are generous and loved by people. Your value to people increases. Generosity is an attribute of Almighty God. How are you going to be generous if you do not have livestock? The attachment of our ancestors to cattle was eternal. Ever since the world existed, they have been taking care of these cattle and supporting themselves through them, trading and raising them till today.

In Ramadan, cattle trade increases and people become rich because of it. Cattle have made them worthy and fulfilled their needs. It is a great part of life. It means payment for a great part of life. It is enough for them, especially for the one who raises livestock. If he spends a lot on them, he receives an abundant return. It is a great value. If you visit a man he offers you one or two goats for you and does not slaughter chickens for you. It is not proper for a guest to come and you slaughter chickens for him. Chicken is important in life, but we should not offer chicken to our guest. It is not acceptable. Serving goat, sheep, or cattle for hospitality is a great respect associated with honor. If you invite someone to a feast, you do not invite him over a fish, because the man may own camels, but you honor him with sheep or cattle even if he owns hundreds of camels. You honor him by giving/serving him a goat. There are beautiful practices in this area. When they invite someone, they give him a goat and break off the head and give the tongue to the poet. That means the poet has great value. They say, 'Give the head to the head'. That's a beautiful expression that brings hearts together. Whoever does that does not go wrong. In fact, you would prefer the person who raises livestock and is generous to people. What makes him generous? For example, if you have a friend who raises cattle for sale, as happens in the days of Eid al-Adha, if you ask him about a good sacrifice, he says to you, go and take what you want. You will find there a good ram, so take it, take what you want, take what you like. This gesture is great. It leads to the harmony of people. In our heritage, there is a great connection to livestock. You cannot separate the two. When the Sheikh invites you, he will be very generous by slaughtering a goat for you. The sheikhs also honor the president, and he honors the heads of state with meat. He does not honor them with chicken. He may have served a chicken, but first

you will find the sacrifice on the table. It is an honor for the people. We cannot give that up. We have lived with cattle since ancient times. They are part of our identity and have brought us blessings. This animal gives birth to one or two every six months, twice a year, but they multiply by the grace of God.

Look at the other animals, such as cats, they give birth to many children, as do dogs. However, there is no blessing for them. Livestock have many blessings, even though people consume much of them, people eat of them, and diseases wipe out many of them, but they are blessed and multiply. The more they are given (slaughtered), the more they multiply and God multiplies them for you. Perhaps because there is a lot of reward for food and drink. Raising livestock is easy and can be done at little cost. In the past, our people raised livestock at no actual cost. They let them loose in the desert. There was plenty of rain and plenty of grass, so the cattle ate the plants in the desert. However, today, the government (may God reward it) has made splendid efforts and has provided land as cattle farms so that the people could raise their cattle.

People deserve that, and this is a support for national identity, a support for tradition, and a strengthening of relations between people. Raising this small animal is of great importance to us, and someone may say: What does it mean for me to raise livestock or go look for some livestock to sell? Why all this? I say this is our work since ancient times and we keep doing this. No one can criticize his heritage or his national identity. We are Bedouin shepherds and the whole Arabian Peninsula is sand. What then will we breed? We shall certainly breed cattle, goats, and sheep and may criticize those who raise parrots, but we do not criticize those who raise cattle while criticize those who raise pigeons or ducks. A cattle breeder is very successful and has a great value with us that

differs from that of others. Perhaps there is someone in every family who breeds cattle, and there may be people who dislike it.

People have changed, but it is still in their blood. If someone had the opportunity to do this, they would. I know of families that share a ranch. Each of the family shares cattle and puts it on the ranch. They leave it there and find someone who is interested in all of it. He then goes to that ranch and takes care of the cattle. When we were young we had cattle, my brother and I. Each had his own. We called them by their names. We were very attached to them. The one who takes care of these animals is a man you can trust. He is a straightforward man who values responsibility, a man of honor; for he holds on to something of the tradition. It is necessary that we hold on to it all. Our connection with cattle is eternal that does not change with the passage of time. Perhaps life has changed, money has increased (thank God) and prosperity has spread, but the greatest families still have livestock in their houses and farms. They are masterful at raising them, fattening them, and breeding them. Certainly, we rejoice and are glad that there are auctions for it, and that we see local Arab cattle fetching high prices. This means that our heritage is valuable and our social heritage is beautiful and appreciated. We hope people will hold on to these beautiful things and not leave them and not be ashamed of them. Support your friends and help them, if only with information. When you have medical information, tell him. If you hear that a country has a way to increase production, tell your friend about it. Should your friend raise cattle for sale, buy from him and not from someone you do not know. Support your friend's success. Charity begins at home, as they say. This is a praiseworthy matter among the people, and we thank our government for taking a great interest in it, for encouraging people to do it, for helping them, and for providing them with all the services in this



field. We also thank the youth, brothers, sisters and mothers who hold on to this tradition and do not give it up and pay and spend money on it. Many of us raise livestock and get no benefit from it, but they raise it anyway. Those who do so are preserving the tradition. They take part with us in preserving our heritage in this dear land.

We hope, God willing, that cattle will increase for all men, and that generosity will increase among the Arabs, God willing. We will work to preserve traditions in our social life. We hope that we have added even simple information about this part of the tradition about cattle. We apologize if some of what we have said on this subject has not been what we intended, or we have erred in doing so, or if this was due to lack of knowledge. We hope (God willing) that we have been able to convey something simple about the value of this part of our tradition.

All the best!







# Al Mehmal 'Ships'



# Al Mehmal 'Ships'



The heritage of the United Arab Emirates comprises four key components, including wood. Wood is a word that means ships, and it is a local word. We call ships wood and mehmal, a ship and the plural is mahamel, ships. When you say 'mehmal', it is a special name for a kind of ship. As for the word wood, it is a general name for all ships, just as you say the word Al-Boush, i.e. camels, specifying no kind of camel, but all camels. The wood stands for all kinds of ships. The components are based on four things in our heritage: the palm tree, the cattle or what is called Al-Housh, then the Al-Boush i.e. camels, and then the wood, which means ships of all kinds. In the past, our life in this part of the world, in the Emirates, depended on ships. Ships were the core of life, in fact, they were the greatest aspect of life. The resources of life on our land are few. We do not have forests to feed ourselves from, nor valleys to grow anything, except for a few things like vegetables and some fruits and other things that we do not depend on in our lives. The sea is the most important factor in our lives. Our food comes from the sea. We live in the sea. Even the Bedouin among us depends on the sea. The geographical environment or the geographical map in the Emirates divides the environment into a coastal environment, the desert environment and the mountain environment. When you leave the ship, you enter the sand dunes, so our life was nomadic. We are Bedouin. We are not all Bedouins, but we all lead nomadic lives. Sheikhs, for example, are not Bedouin, but they lead a life that has a Bedouin aspect. Bedouins are their companions or allies, as are the

people of Al-Hijr, the people of the mountains who are not Bedouin, but in their lives, they are Bedouin. Sheikhs rule the country from the coast, but they know all the Bedouins. Because we live a life where there is something Bedouin, we go from the sea and go to the sand dunes, we ride our camels and go. That's what our life is like. They mixed all that up and made us all Bedouins. They made us all nomads. We do not say Bedouin, but we have Bedouin people among us. When they say Bedouin and townspeople, we find townspeople and Bedouin among us. The owner of a camel cannot live without the cattle. You say that he is a Bedouin, but he is a Bedouin and a townsman at the same time. He knows the countryside and the city, and he also knows the sea. Bedouins go diving, maybe not all of them, but some of them go diving and there are Bedouins who raise livestock. In Dubai, for example, there is an area called Al Khawaneej or Al Awir. All the inhabitants of these areas dive, and they are different from the nomadic Bedouins. We find that 30% of the Bedouin are involved in diving, which means that the matter is divided between city dwellers and Bedouin. The ship is at the heart of the life of the people of the Emirates. For if we go back to the beginning, we find that the people of the Emirates cross the many creeks in the Emirates by small boats called Abras. When they want to dive, they use big ships called Snipik and Jawalbit. When they go on voyages, they use other ships called boats, and inside they use other ships called (sem'a and their singular sama). The subject of ships or boats is one with which we are intimately connected. It is the backbone of life. It is true that in ancient times not all people owned ships, not all people go to sea to fish as they do today. Nowadays they have big ships. In the sheri season some of them go fishing for a month with big refrigerators and then return. In the old days, they used to fish on the beaches in the creeks, or with what

they called garagear, nets or hooks which are bait and strings. Some also use salted fish when moving from one region to another. In the past, there was plenty of fish in the sea. Now, the situation is different. This means that the ship was mainly associated with the profession of diving, traveling or moving to other regions, such as Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait. All of this was done through ships. They also go to Oman and India, which they explored by ships. However, the key aspect about it is the diving. Diving was a journey, as they say, the winter and summer journeys. The diving journey was the journey of a lifetime. You go diving, people gather and each vessel takes a nokhuda (skipper). Each skipper has about 20, 30 or 50 men. He would give them some money to go back and buy things to support their families while they go diving with what is called the kawad. Diving has been around for a long time, maybe 100 or 150 years. We met some old people, in their nineties or late eighties, who used to dive. They told us that they used to go diving for 25 rupees just after or just before the First World War. Diving stopped when the cultured pearl came along, which ended diving, and when the British brought cars to the region. This area was under the protection of the British state and some other areas belonged to France. Diving was discontinued. If a diver went diving for two months and then returned and sold the pearls, he could live on the wages he received for being a diver. Sometimes the man would go diving for 7 rupees. We heard this from people who were in their eighties in the 90s. They went diving when they were in their thirties, about 1930. Diving was for 7 rupees. It was impossible to go diving when they were under fourteen. They could dive at that age only. Things were different then, men were real men. The girl got married maybe when she was twelve or thirteen. People had responsibilities, so did the boy, even though he was twelve

years old. He was considered a responsible man. He meets people and they talk to him about important matters instead of his father. There are stories in history that tell us that men could rule at the age of twelve and thirteen. Men in the past were different. They could go diving as men as early as fourteen, but no less than that. In diving a man hangs his heart on a rope. He dives and then comes out. It was a great suffering. For diving, their lives and livelihood they borrowed money that they would repay from the wages of diving. I know someone who said that his mother smuggled her son because his father had died owing money to the Nokhdha who decided to take her son diving the next year. If he does not work as a diver, he will work as an assistant and will be a newcomer to the ship. This man says that his mother smuggled him to the Al Batinah region so he would not be taken diving when he was young because his father took money from the Nokhdha to go diving but died before repaying his debts. This is the custom of the Nawakhas who give money in exchange for diving beforehand. If something goes wrong, the Nokhdhas lose their money. Some of the Nokhdhas have therefore taken the sons of divers who have died instead of their fathers. This woman ran away with her son so that he would not be taken for diving. Diving was tiring to that extent. People were diving between life and death. It was the diver who was important in the mission of diving or the diving profession. In those days people were very honest. There was only one judge in the country, but the problems were few. People solved their cases among themselves. They were true to their words. They did their work honestly. I remember one of the poets, 'May God have mercy on him,' said in a verse while he was diving and speaking in the language of a diver, he said in a sung poem:



**Oh my, Oh my, Oh my,  
the day I came to those whose homes were deserted  
I looked around at the beautiful,  
Clapping the left hand onto my right, empty-handed**

In this poem, the poet alludes to 'Al-Ghais and Al-Seeb, i.e., the diver and the net.' By explaining this line, he shows you the extent of suffering that the diver experiences while diving.

The means of transportation or the ship is the means of livelihood for the people of the seashore in this country, the Gulf Coast.

What was the poet trying to say? He spoke to the helper who pulled him from the bottom of the sea and said to him:



**I said, take the robe, please,  
do not leave me to my demise,  
and turn towards my buzzing breast,  
Woe to him whose helper is inexperienced in the sea,  
and when he rises from the water,  
the robe will have ninety folds.**

When they dived, there was a person, 'Majdami', who was left behind on the boat taking care of them. The Nokhdha was also left behind on the boat.

They both remained on the ship. When the wind blew against them, they went to an island called Al-Bandar where they took refuge. When the north wind blew and stormed, they would go to the island and stay there for a day or a day and a half. When the winds calmed down, they returned to the sea. Sometimes they stayed longer on the island, for example, a week.

When a storm arises in those days, we call it Tahf. When the storm comes, it lasts half an hour, but if it has rain, it lasts ten minutes only. The ancestors dived from morning to night. They stayed in the water all day. That's what we heard from them. What I want to say is that the poet we mentioned says that the diver turns to the helper. He says to him, "Take the rope, 'you see the diver descend with two ropes, he descends with one rope called (the zipin). That's what they call it if I am not mistaken. He also descends with a rope they call (Yida), the zipin rope, which is tied into a rock. This rock lowers the diver to the bottom of the sea. The diver connects the rope between his toes and then descends. It is like (al-bilad), a heavy piece of lead. When the diver reaches the bottom of the sea, he leaves this rock behind to be pulled by his helper. The second rope is connected to a basket in which the diver places oysters when he picks them up from the seabed. When the diver descends to the seabed, he unties the rope tied to the rock. He lets it go from his toes and the helper pulls it. Then the rope tied to the basket remains as a lifeline for him, with which the helper pulls him up when his mission of picking up oysters is complete. When he picks up the oysters and put them in the basket, he shakes it and the helper senses this and pulls him up. Nowadays, some studies and science say that a diver can stay underwater for four minutes while diving. He cannot hold his breath longer than that. In some competitions we have reached seven minutes and that is after fifteen years of training. Some of us used to reach six or seven minutes, but the diver just dives and does not move. Perhaps he can stay only two or three minutes. With practice they may reach four minutes. I think they reach five minutes. The rope (alida) which a diver uses takes a great distance to descend into the sea. The poet says that its length is ninety folds, each fold being equal to one meter. This means that it is

ninety meters long because the rope may have been bent and lengthened by the water current. So, the diver's rope may be as much as seventy feet long, and so the diver who is writing poetry speaks to the helper asking him to draw the rope, and begs him to draw it quickly, otherwise he will sink and die. He says to him: (Pull the rope before I die). He is still talking about the helper who does not care what he says and may let him die. This dialogue shows you the suffering of the diver at that time, a dialogue between the diver and the helper. It is the dialogue of death and life, so the diver's life is in the hands of the helper. Had he not paid attention to the diver's call for help, he would have perished and died at the bottom of the sea. The life of diving, to which the ship brings us, was the backbone of life, allowing us to live a decent life. You also find the Bedouin on the land with his tent. He has no resources and his condition will change if he finds resources other than these in this desert. His condition will inevitably change. The ship was the backbone of life for our ancestors. It is the safety valve that carries them, brings them drink, food, clothing, medicine, and money. There was a kind of small ships called (Chaleh). These Chalehs are boarded by some financiers who go to big ships to bring them supplies and buy pearls from them. These ships or boats used to carry heavy loads. They were of great value to our early people. The ship is a part of our heritage and identity making it a piece of us. No matter how much times change, it remains in our minds. We do not give it up. We love to preserve it. We love those who preserve it and teach their children to love and care for it. We value those who do it as a hobby and love and appreciate them for holding on to their tradition. We are proud of all our people who live on the shores of the sea, from Al Sila to Fujairah. We are proud of them and what they do to look after the sea and the boats. They are something wonderful. Cherishing the sea is an important matter for us and it is important to preserve it. Everyone preserves their heritage and passes it on to future generations. That was one aspect of ships and their importance in diving. They transported people, their food and drink, and they helped them live. When diving ended, the ships remained valuable





even more than before. Diving was followed by trade that existed between us and Africa. They brought wood from there, and brought many things with them. It was a land full of good things, especially wood, which we needed most. We traded wood to build houses. It is a simple thing to build a house of wood. The roofs of the houses are made of wood, then mud is painted on it and it is called (Balmdar). Then we discovered India. The boat took us to India. Boats cross the ocean to take us there, nothing but boats. They can take you to these remote areas. We are talking about a time more than two hundred, three hundred or a hundred years ago. It was dangerous. Camels cannot carry you. They were boats that carried people to distant lands. They were the safety valve for everything.

We have thus concluded the subject of diving. We now come to the subject of travel. All men engage in trade. They go with their trade and come back. They go by ship to bring things and take things across the creek, not in Dubai, but in Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Quwain, Ras al-Khaimah and Fujairah. It's endless, even in Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries like Bahrain and others. They do the same thing. Travel is their principal occupation. When the boat or ship arrives, it may be loaded with fifty tons, which are divided among the people. Everyone carries some on his camel and leaves. The camel can carry maybe three hundred kilos or one hundred kilos or two hundred kilos, but what would carry these many tons the ship brings from abroad. Everything comes in consumable quantities that come from abroad, through the ships until today. Planes carry little, as they carry light things, and most things come through ships and then loaded in trucks. Now they do as they used to do before. Of course, in the past, if the ships came, they carried what was in them on camels. We cannot abandon ships. Ships include the Jalibut, the Sanbuk, the Samaa, the Indian Boom, and the Samaa which were made by us. There are those who say of Alboom that they are Indians. We distinguished ourselves by making many ships (such as the Baggara), (Al-Sama'a), (Al-Sanbuk) and (Al-Shua'i). These are the three ships that are part of our heritage, and they are our own industry. Travelling

was our work. We work in small boats. There are those who do what is called (Al-Daghwa) or (Al-Dagha), a local method of fishing. The most famous local fishing method is (Al-Daghawa), a net attached to two ropes. I may not explain it exactly, but this net is tied with two ropes which carry them on a small ship or boat, the (shasha) made of palm trees. I rode on it more than once, and that was during the lifetime of the great poet Al-Majidi bin Dhaher. May God have mercy on him. People came to him and told him we will take a tax from you on your work. In Ras Al Khaimah there were even taxes on entering ships, there were taxes in some places that cost something. It is said that they came to Ibn Zahir and said to him; you owe a tax so and so, and he is a famous poet. He recited a line of poetry in which he says: All I own is a shasha boat, whoever wants it, let him take it. He means that I have nothing for you to tax. I have nothing but this shasha boat. I'll go fishing with it, bring back two fish, and come back. The shasha is a small boat that does not go far. There are types of shasha that are big to a certain extent to carry the fishing nets. The shasha boat was closely related to the profession of the Dhaghwa fishing method, because it is light, so they take it to the coast. They put fishing nets in shasha boats, in which they put the net, the fishing net, or the rope on one side and on the other. After that they do something that looks like the letter (U) in the English language, then they throw the net, then they bring the rope, leaving a space of about a kilo or half a kilo between the rope and the other. I myself used to work in Daghi or Dhaghwa. We did not see our friends pulling the rope as if they were a kilometer away from us. Each of us pulls the rope by his side, and they gradually approach the shore. They bring the fish in the net to the shore, and then they divide it. Everyone who works with them for two hours takes the fish home. This Shasha boat was one of the main boats they went on and worked with this method of fishing. There are many fishing methods, including the so-called (Al-Mahawi), (Al Yarof), (Al-Laikh) and (Al-Hadra). You see the Shasha boat moving forward, then you find an Abra for the people to cross, then you find a small Jalbut or a Sanbok or a Sh'i boat. Ships were closely associated with

people. They were most closely associated with diving and then with travel. Travel is the essence of life. It goes with things and brings them back, especially when there were no roads. Travel is the pulse of life, and until tomorrow, it will still be the pulse of life. Ports are one of our biggest destinations. Look at the ports, how big they are and what we are most famous for these days. We run the biggest ports in the world from Dubai because we have experienced it and we know, praise God. It is part of our identity, the identity of the citizens of this country and the Gulf. Ships have always been associated with us. Anyone who works at sea is respected and loved by us and we pray for him and hope that he does not give up that work and passes it on to his children. We tell him to teach them. Try to do everything you can to make them love it, because it is part of your heritage, which is the identity of the people of this region. I say if I do not go to the ocean and my neighbor goes; I am fine, thank God. We are all fine, and that is a blessing and a benefit. There is a social benefit that is more than a material benefit. We hope, God willing, that we will not give up our heritage. We hope we will always work together, whether ordinary people or even officials who specialize in the sea or in services for people. We urge them to serve and help people so that they do not leave the sea, solve their problems and take care of them what they can, find solutions for them and do not bother them. You should make them love this profession and not hate it. The old saying goes, (people who cooperate are never humiliated), so when people cooperate, they are not humiliated. May God unite us in goodness and in love for our traditions and that through this we rise and not fall and make it to the top. I apologize if my information is incomplete, if I have forgotten something, or if it has slipped through my mind. I hope that we have benefited and that I have not been mistaken about some of the information.

Best regards,







# Al Nakhlah 'Palm'



# Al Nakhlah 'Palm'



We said earlier that the heritage of the United Arab Emirates is based on four pillars, one of which is the palm tree. If we go back to the history of the palm tree, we find it in pre-Islamic times. The date palm was there when the country existed. It was found with the existence of this region of the country and spread amazingly in the Gulf countries. You can find the palms on the coasts opposite the Arabian Peninsula in the north and south. Each has its own character. Then the date palms spread from the island to Egypt and reached the Iranian coast. The palm tree is amazing, its history is ancient. There is a wonderful connection between us and the date palm. One palm tree is enough for an entire neighborhood for an entire year, feeds it, satisfies its hunger, warms it and covers it. There are palm trees that produce thirty date branches. If anyone invests in this, he will live on it and sell it, and if he has three people in his house, he will make a canopy for his house out of it, or an arbour, or a cover, and he will make that out of palm trees.

In the past, we had nothing to do but go to the sea. In summer, we go to the sea, but in winter we return to our farms, take care of them, and eat their produce. I mean the palm trees in the summer, and in the winter, we take care of them and the palm tree is the goal of the people. In the past, a house without dates was not considered a house, because a person toils and works hard until he buys three bowls of dates for the entire year, even if he does not have enough meat or fish to live on. Dates are indispensable; they are the food of man everywhere. For example, a person can make a long journey to Mecca. People carry dates with them, dates help them on their journey. Dates are also their companion when they go diving. In the past, they had 'muhaya.' They would dive the whole day, from morning till night. So, the person stays in the sea water all day, prays and returns. The 'Muhayah' entails the man or diver dive into the sea for five or six hours, then they give him dates. He is attached

to a rope and given a morsel of dates while he is in the sea. Those few dates are worth a whole carcass to him.

We return to the palm tree and dates, and we find in them our sayings and wise words. There are many things connected with palms. No home is without a small palm tree, and dates are among the best things offered to people. One hundred or one hundred and fifty years ago, there was no coffee. We did not hear of coffee until we read about it in books. In the days of the Messenger - God bless him and grant him peace - and the rightly guided caliphs, there was no coffee. There were dates and milk. No one used to honor his guest with coffee, coffee is recent. We are the ones who invented coffee and made it a symbol of generosity and hospitality. Just like the 'Aish' rice that came to us after we discovered distant lands, but we used to have grains, wheat. Nowadays, the situation is totally different. We have made coffee a symbol of generosity and hospitality, but we are most generous with dates. This is related to the date bag made of fronds and the importance that dates had for the Arabs in this region for their stay and travel.

Nowadays, when any of us travel, we do not take dates with us, and some of them, if they travel to Switzerland, take dates with them. There is a strange connection with dates. I will not talk about the religious aspect of it. The date palm is mentioned in the Qur'an. This is clear in Surat Maryam, in the story of Mary and the birth of her son Jesus - peace be upon him. The date palm is wonderful in every way, both in eating it and in storing it, for it does not spoil by storage. Dates contain everything that man needs. Especially in the Gulf region, there is an eternal connection to dates and the palm that goes beyond national identity, it is more than just heritage. We are thrilled when we see big companies planting palm trees because it is better for us than the coconut palm. For us, a date palm is more honorable than a million trees. The date palm and the ghaf tree have equal value.

In the old days, the people who were on the sea on the coasts fished with nets and others. They used frond midrib for these nets so they would not sink to the bottom of the sea. As for 'Al-Jarid', they make 'shasha', a small boat for

fishing with 'alyakh', the nets in which they catch small fish called 'Wild' and 'Aoumah', especially in Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah and even in Dubai where the shasha was key to catching fish. We are talking about an old time that has been gone for more than a hundred years, when people had nothing and walked on their feet everywhere.

We used to make small boats out of the palm, or little 'shush,' which was useful to us in fishing.

The houses we used to do as 'Bukhakhair,' the singular of which is 'Bukhar,' which is the storehouse, an enclosed house with windows. They call it 'Bukhar' or 'storehouse,' where they stay or sit to receive people. The roof is made of palm trunks and is covered with 'Hosor,' mats made of palm trees. However, the houses of the Bedouins differ from this in having in the middle pegs made of the ghaf or sidr tree, representing the goat-hair nets. The urban houses were called 'stores' and they covered their roofs with mats made of palm trees. They cut the palm trunks in half and used them. Then there is something called 'leaf' which is got from the palm trees and from which they make ropes. This 'leaf' is sometimes put in the mouth of the 'Dallah,' the traditional yellow Arabic coffee pot that they call 'Al-Raslan'.

They take some of 'leaf' in their mouths, clean it, wash it, and put it in their mouths. They make 'mats' out of it, and many things for camels, equipment for camels, and equipment for diving. All this is made from the palm tree. They throw nothing from the palm tree. Its leaves are for the houses. They make 'Al-Da'oon,' palm frond panels, trimmed and then build the houses from it. I am talking about an ancient thing, and our circumstances differ nowadays with palm trees, the ancient palm tree was equal to everything, its fronds are used to make frond panel, the door, the wall, the stretched tent, the interlocking 'Areesh,' traditional house, and the winter tent, which they line with mats from the inside 'and cover with samim, which are soft mats, from above. The sema is somewhat thicker than the mats. The winter tent is triangular and the Areesh house is square and is lined from the inside with what is called 'Al-Khaws'. All the palm tree is useful, the fronds and

‘Al Khalal’, the dates that are green at the beginning of their appearance. They used to have fun eating them because. The palm tree has a beautiful state, a psychological state that connects you to your country, something that brings you back to your country, brings you together, increases your sense of patriotism. It makes you feel your love for your country. You feel you love this country, it’s very psychological.

Nowadays, if our youth find almonds grown without chemicals or chemical fertilizers, they would reminisce the past. Their minds would open, they would know that they come from this land. This strengthens their belonging, and so does the palm tree in our psyche. It strengthens that belonging in us - socially, psychologically and nationally. The date palm bears fruit in the beginning, which is called ‘Khalal’ and then becomes ‘Busr’, some of which are good and some are bad or bitter. We do not eat some date palms that are not of good quality, so we feed their dates to camels and cattle because it increases their strength. Everything has something that goes with it. When the rain come, grass grows on the land for the cattle to fatten for six months. The benefit of the ‘busr’ of palm trees to the cattle is very great. It can sustain them for an entire year. The ‘busr’ turns into fresh dates which the people eat. The fresh dates bring people together in the summer and bring you closer to your family and friends. Eating one or two fresh dates is a great patriotic dose. Meeting with your family, father, uncle, mother and sisters over a plate of fresh dates while drinking a cup of coffee is delightful when you are with your children and brothers.

Some harvest their palm and give it to those who make dates out of them. The dates are placed on a sort of ‘satah,’ a kind of carpet on which the dates are spread to dry, or to turn fresh dates into dried dates. It is made of palm fronds as a ‘mattress,’ or fronds are spread and ‘talaq’ is laid on it, which looks like a carpet. This ‘talaq’ was spread in rooms or chambers. It was made of plastic. They would spread it out and put dates on it. They rubbed it well with clean and washed feet. When we were young, they invited us to do this. After they rubbed the dates, they would pack them in large metal tins and store

them. The dates before being rubbed are called 'farada', single pieces, because each piece is separate. Then when they are rubbed, they are called 'seh'. 'Al-Madlouk' is a common name. We sometimes call it 'seh', and they are dates. 'Seh' is stored, lived on, and eaten. So, the palm tree bears fruit and benefits people. Even the ones you dislike, you may have cut off and eaten the 'heeb', the heart of the palm tree, or you eat 'Alghaidh', palm date, it is medicine. Palm trees have wonderful medicine. There is a palm tree called 'Al Fard' which is a good palm tree. People love it until today. Many of them like 'Al Fard' because their dates are firm and dry to a certain degree. As for the fresh dates, they are not usually eaten, and they are not considered fresh dates, because fresh dates never come from fard. If I wanted to eat them as fresh dates, I could not do so. Al-Fard dates over which an entire year passes are called 'Al-Houli', i.e. a year has passed. It is used to treat bruises and possibly broken bones. It is heated and placed on the site of the fracture or pain. 'Al-Houli' from 'Al-Fard' is a medicine. It is a kind of date palm for which we are famous which is sold a lot in Liwa. The date palm does not thrive in the mountainous regions, but better on the seashore, because it needs moisture. These dates are left until the end of the year and then used as medicine, I mean the 'fard'. Sometimes they are mixed with turmeric or salt or perhaps flour, and this is a wonderful thing in the palm and one of its benefits. Of course, this is an ancient practice, perhaps thousands of years ago. Our connection to the palm in the Emirates and the Gulf is perhaps more than that between a mother and her child.

If you go to some areas we have in the Emirates in 'Hatta' and some valleys, you will find a valley where there are palm trees, this palm tree and the two palm trees belong to Saeed or Khamis for example. There are three or four palm trees for Mohammed. This is how people used to do it, it is beautiful and strange. The palm tree means that a man is alive. Nowadays when a man comes to you and asks for your daughter's hand, you ask him about his work and his house, you ask him: do you have a house? In the old days, when a suitor came, you knew his family, I mean his father, his mother and everything else, but if you knew he had date palms, you married him, even if

it was only two or one date palm; because the palm is a country.

During the lifetime of Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, may God have mercy on him, and during the lifetime of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God have mercy on him, they made significant efforts in this field. Even Sheikh Zayed, may God have mercy on him, did great things in this field by giving people palm trees and digging wells so that they could plant them. Nowadays, we are thrilled when we find young men in their thirties who have long experienced with palm trees and bring wonderful varieties. Today there are centers in the Emirates that produce amazing varieties of fresh dates. The palm tree is a blessed tree. Every time they work on it, it brings them wonderful things. We export them abroad, and there are many people whose livelihood depends on them to this day. People have changed their lives because of the lavish income from the palms. Earlier, someone might spend two thousand dirhams on palms and earn nothing. Today, he might earn an income of one hundred thousand thanks to the palm trees. The date palms are profitable even when they do not bear fruit, because they sell the young palms 'Al-Sarm', and they sell big palms and make a profit.

Our connection with the palm tree is eternal until the day of judgement. We and the palm tree will remain inseparable, for it is an element of life and tradition in the Gulf.

If we count the pillars of heritage, we find them, as has been said, the ships, the cattle, the she-camel, and the palm tree. The palm tree is not less valuable than the rest of the pillars. Nowadays, there are markets for palms. A great majlis is not complete without dates. There is no house you enter today that does not have dates, because we are connected to them. We lived and ate from them and made money from them. Our family built their houses out of palm trees. We went through the sea with palm trees, with their fronds and other things. They made boats for us, and they made ropes, the strongest ropes called 'Kumbar' from palm branches. Without the palm tree, there was no life. Without the palm tree, there was no 'rasha', a rope to draw water from a well. The Bedouins used it when they came to the wells to fetch water, and

it was called the 'Al bay' rope. They sang when they fetched water from their wells. They may have also made ropes from the 'Al-Ghadha' plant, which they mixed with palm and made ropes from it. It is called Al-Masd and ropes made from trees and palm trees are part of it.

We eat the fruit of the palm tree, and we eat the first fruits. Even the 'Hishaf', hard dried dates, we give to cattle and cows. The palm tree is one of the main pillars of heritage in the UAE and the Gulf region. The palm tree is generous and blessed, and it will remain so. Our interest in it will remain and we pray to God to prolong the life of our sheikhs who are committed to the palm tree and nowadays dedicate a celebration and many events to it.

We always say that if you have fifteen trees in your house, at least five of them should be palm trees. If you had one palm tree in your house, it would bless your house. It gives you a connection to your house and makes you a person who belongs to this wonderful land and this good heritage. We urge all to care for palm trees and never leave them.

We hope that we all know and appreciate the value of the palm tree and that it is present in our lives and never out of our minds, and so I hope that I have been able to give you good information about this blessed palm tree. I hope that I have brought you closer to this aspect of heritage in the Emirates so that we can always work together to enrich our information. I always wish that we present to you the distinguished and that we have introduced to you a beautiful and valuable part of the heritage of our beloved country.





# Al Khail 'Horse'



# Al Khail 'Horse'



There are many things that our ancestors bequeathed to us in various fields, including horses. There are few horses in our region. The geographic map of the state does not allow for horse breeding, but the Arabs are the Arabs. In fact, we cannot call someone who does not know horse riding a knight or a horseman. We ride camels, so what is the name of the one who rides camels? Who takes care of the camels? There is no word like that of the rider, because the word knight appeared before the descent of Islam, before the message, because there were knights in the land since land itself existed. The rider is tied to the horse. If there is no horse, there is no rider. If you want to praise a man, you might say to him, 'You are a knight,' so you are a horse-owner, a gun-owner, a brave man. The word knight is associated with beautiful things in a man or beautiful qualities in a man, so you say this is a knight, which means he is a true man. If we go back in time, two or three hundred years, the knight means a warrior who is not afraid. A man who helps people, a man who fights for his money and defends his group. The good qualities you want in a man are combined in the word knight. We are Arabs but we ride camels rather than horses, and riding a camel is more difficult than riding a horse, because when you ride a horse you ride in the middle of its back and not so when you ride a camel. You ride at the end of the back, you balance on it. The horses here are ridden without saddles, the riders hang on to their necks and run with them, but they are dangerous, more dangerous than camels, because they move fast. In the Emirates we have all the coasts of the country where the mountains tower over them. There is sand, there

are beaches and there are sabkhas. Horses are everywhere, in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Quwain, Ras al-Khaimah and Fujairah. We all have horses. They are few, and not so many as camels, for they need more care, because they get tired in the cold. They need something to protect them from the cold. In the heat, horses also need shade. When horses got sick, it was difficult. If the horse had a stomachache, it could die. One of the strange things about the horse is said to be that it has no spleen. It was also thought that a camel has no gallbladder, and a horse has no spleen, hence a horse is fast. One of the most important things we had is that we are devoted to horses. It is impossible to find a sheikh who is the head of the tribe and has no horses, or that the son of the sheikh does not ride, that is reprehensible, because the son of the sheikh must be a sheikh after him. So, you see that the children of the sheikhs and the sons of the heads of the Arabs or the heads of the tribes are always knights. They paraded on them and moved from one mare to another. The horses run fast, and this was one of the best displays we had. They paraded camels that they stood on while they ran, and did the same with the horses. They trained them for it.

The horse puts his feet to his owner's head and smells him when he comes to him from afar. If he falls from it, he will not stumble or be hurt, I know not how? Praise be to Allah. Arabian horses long for their owners, know their owner, and distinguish him among men. They do not leave him, and perhaps if the camel's owner fell away, he would leave him, but the horse remains with him. There are those who say that when the camel knocks you down, he says 'May you be safe,' meaning himself, and the horse says 'May God take you' but that is only nonsense, the talk of men. Just like they tell us if they do not want to feed the cats that they are praying against you if you feed the cat. They do not want us to feed it so

it will not disturb them and soil the place. We do not know if it is true or not, but if a knight falls off his horse while it's fast, it must be painful. If you fall off a horse, you will undoubtedly suffer harm.

Horses existed long time ago, most men are proud of them. Man is proud to have a son who is a horseman. In the past, poets have sung about it. Poetry is the common language. All Arabs used to say poetry, and all people used to reply with rhymed words, even if it was not poetry. Arabs have tact in replying because the Arabic language is rich. A single Arabic word can be enough for a hundred words. If someone says to you, 'Oh, my life,' term of endearment, you answer him, 'Your wish is granted.' This word is better than sixty words; it is enough for everything. When you want to ask for something, you may be shy because of this word. If someone calls you by your name and you answer him with the word 'Labbayah' or 'Labbayak, command,' which means I will answer you, just command. This is a word worth more than a hundred words. Arabic is an eloquent language, and an Arab is proud to call his son a poet, and he is proud that his son is an archer or a sharpshooter among those who hunt falcons while they fly, or a rider who stands on the horse while it runs. Our aborigines and those who lived with our ancestors tell us that the rider descends to the bottom of the horse and then returns to the horse's back as it runs. People have trained horses to do the same. Among those known to have done that are His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid and his Al Maktoum lineage. They paraded their horses in front of the sheikhs at the beginning of the union. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum 'may God protect him' was a horseman who could change from one horse to another as it ran. Our ancestors did more than that, for they were skilled in handling horses, as well as cattle and other animals. It was necessary to have horses, for they needed horses to recover what had been stolen from them by the bandits, who, when they found

anything or anyone outside the town, stole it and took it away. The only way they could get back what they had stolen from them was to catch up with them on horseback. The camel cannot catch up with them as fast as the horse. There are camels that are fast, but they are few, for not all camels are fitted for running.

The presence of horses was very important among all tribes, including our tribes in the Emirates. The horses were present, and the riders were present to this day. Their names, biographies and their skills in handling horses are mentioned. In Dubai, there is an area called 'Hor Al Anz', so called because she was an ancestor who tied it up in this area. The names of the horses are big. They have breeds and names. Their fathers, mothers and grandfathers are mentioned. You know where they come from, they have a great connection to the people. They are not just a running animal, they are powerful and their form is wonderful. Nowadays, you realize that there is a difference between those who ride in a luxury car and a humble car. Horses are luxurious animals. If you meet them somewhere, it means that place is luxurious, has a high social degree. If you come to a country and find horses there, it means that there are riders in that country, where there are those who defend them and those who help people, because horses and knights do not compare with lowly people. The knight does not steal and does not cheat and does not demean himself. Horses were associated with honor, generosity, and grandeur in people and were associated with a high social life. Knights help all people and are respectful, hospitable and valuable. We have a strong connection to horses and have written a lot of poetry about them. Our names are linked to their names, and we now compete with them with the great cultures. We advance with them to the first ranks in horse competitions, thanks to God, and thanks to the policies of our rulers and our people. May God prolong the lives of those present, and may God have mercy

on the founders who cared for the horses, even though in those days which were not the days of wealth or prosperity, so that a man might not support himself. As for our rulers and chiefs of tribes among us, they took care of the horses and did not neglect them. They shared their food with them, that it might remain between them. This relationship has remained between us to this day and they have passed it on to us and we will preserve it, God willing. We know their social value before the material one, not in the matter of selling, buying and bartering, but also in our pride for a long time, and we will remain so. We will encourage all who cherish horses, for they are an authentic part of the heritage of our state and the heritage of our society, which we are all responsible for preserving. We will remain united in kindness and preserve that heritage. So, I hope I have been able to convey something of the social values of this beautiful heritage called the horse in our society and the society of our ancestors. I apologize for any shortcomings. We will, God willing, preserve our heritage forever.







# Al Teir 'Falcon'



# Al Teir 'Falcon'



Falcons are one of the most important things in our tradition that we inherited in the United Arab Emirates. They are of great importance in the Gulf region. They may not be as important in Oman and Yemen. By falcons, I mean hunting falcons like the Shaheen falcon and saker falcon. Our ancestors hunted with falcons. It is well known and widely believed that the Shaheen falcon is a category of falcon and so is the saker falcon. The first is blacker, and the other is whiter. Of course, every year that passes, the falcon changes its shape and size. We note that the head of the falcon is an emblem for most Arab countries, and not only for the Gulf countries. The emblem of the United Arab Emirates is the falcon standing and turning to the other side. I believe this is also the emblem of the state of Kuwait. Some local authorities, such as the police, also use the falcons as their emblem. However, the falcon is not a thing on which social life in the Gulf States is based. As we know, life in the Gulf region depends on four things:

- Ships
- Date Palm
- Cattle
- Camels

The falcon is not one of them, but the falcon is one of the broad titles in our heritage and in the Emirates. Of all the falcons, what the people of

the Emirates love most is the saker falcon, because of its characteristics. Undoubtedly, the Shaheen falcon is faster and more capable of hunting, but the Emiratis love the Saker falcon, and this is an old thing with them. The ancestors in the Emirates love the Saker Falcon, just as they love the Riba'a (camel of a certain age and characteristics). The Al Riba'a is called Ftaim in the first year of its life, then Hijj in the second year, then lijj in the third, then it is Yatha'a in the fourth year. In the fifth year, when its molars come out, they are called Thanaya, so they call it 'Iyhas'. They say Thanaya, then Riba'a when the age is six years. They say (al-Thani, Ny, riba'a, sima and qa'a), so the riba'a is stronger than al-Thani, even if it is bigger than this. It will be stronger. They have experience in it, they have worked on it or taken it to work. Nowadays it is quite different, and the age of falcons is not like that of camels. Our ancestors put up with heat because it has strange beautiful qualities. Falcons have something wonderful about them. For example, when we praise someone today, we do not call him a lion; we say he is a wolf. Most people in the Gulf say that, and they do not say lion because lion is not from our area. Perhaps some would say not to call a man a wolf because wolves are in the dog categories (May God honor you). It is true or real that wolves belong to the category of dogs, but they differ from them. A wolf has good qualities. One of his best qualities is that he is loyal to his mother and father. That is why people are named after him and love him. It used to be said that the molar of the wolf drives away the jinn. In fact, the jinn only come to you at God's command and not because there is a wolf's molar, but these are old beliefs. We follow them in some of these beliefs. We believe their words are true, even if science says otherwise, because they are people who follow their pure intentions, and God gives them according to their intentions, because they are pure. Men are named after

wolves because they have a good nature. When a wolf marries, he does not change his wife. He does not cheat from behind like hyenas. When they want to praise a man, they call him a wolf. In fact, we are talking about his qualities, not his species. For example, if your cousin betrays you, you will not love him. But if a stranger comes to you, even if he is not of your religion, and he respects you and does not cheat you, you love him because you are looking for beautiful qualities, not names. In the same way, the falcon has beautiful qualities, and that is why it is a symbol for countries.

In former times, falcons were not kept in the sweltering season in summer. I am speaking of the past. Falcons used to come as migratory falcons from Pakistan, Iran and other countries. They would cross the ocean until they reached Fujairah and Al Batinah, arriving hungry while perhaps hunting for prey. People throw on it what they catch with it, like nets and other things, then they take care of it and teach it to hunt in winter. If a falcon's feather falls out of its wing, it loses its balance. I remember past people could tell the value of a falcon that hunted or was suitable for hunting by putting their hand under the tail feather. If they find it hard as a nail, they say that this falcon is fit for hunting, so they take it. If they find the feathers are soft or bending, they leave it. They do not hunt small falcons, like the small falcon, Tubba'a and the Wakri. They care about the possession of the saker falcon, the shaheen and the small falcon 'Farkh'. I remember one of the old people, when asked about it, said that the small falcon played a different role in hunting, as it was a safety valve when they went hunting (Houbara), in contrast to our time when pastures were scarce. Our ancestors hunted on camels because there were no cars.

I met a man who was born at the beginning of the century, so in 1910

and 1920, who went hunting on camels, maybe from about 1930 to 35, when there were no cars. He told us that camels transported them and when they hunted houbara; they escape the falcon. He said they look upwards; they look at the sky. He flies into the middle of the sky and spirals around himself. The falcon cannot catch up with him and can not chase him, except for the Saker Falcon, not even the Jirnas Falcon. Then they ask for the one that has a Saker Falcon, so they bring him in to see it, and then they let him go after it. He turns after him as she turns until he reaches her. Of course, he does not chase her in mid-air in the sky. This is what the past people said, for they say that the Saker Falcon flies over them and descends upon them. When it descends, it chases it if it is strong, otherwise they release the Shaheen hawk if it is large, because the Houbara slaps the falcon. One thing that makes a mockery of the owner of the falcon when he sends his falcon to houbara, and he gets hit, especially if it was a khirb, a big falcon. So this is a problem that he cannot solve, and so the owner of the falcon that was slapped by the houbara cannot sleep at night because he feels sorry for his falcon. The Saker and the Shaheen, when released, live by their hunting. That is why the Saker and the Shaheen have a special value for us. That is why it has been made our symbol. The characteristics of the saker falcon are beautiful and not found in all falcons. Among the most important of these endearing qualities is that he is a free little falcon. I remember a poem by the poet Aousha bint Khalifa, 'May God have mercy on her', in which she says to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, 'May God protect him' you are:

A free saker with fierce claws

Among falcons of prey you are not an old one

She says to him, 'You are a saker falcon,' so she gave him that property.

If you give the sheikh this quality, it means that she is giving him a wonderful quality, as if she were telling him what kind of saker falcon you resemble. Falcons have something good about them, something exquisite that shows their pride and dignity. It does not just fly in the sky. There are those who say that the falcon does not eat the dead. I say that is not true, because if you slaughter a chicken for the falcon, it will eat it. After all, the falcon is an animal, after all. It will eat when it is hungry. The things that are not in the falcon are not in it and should not be made up about it. If you were to slaughter a prey animal for him, he would eat it, and he will not eat the dead animal, but if you were to slaughter something for him, he would eat it, like a chicken or a quail. For example, as long as he is hungry, he will eat what you give him. But the dangerous thing about a falcon, which people do not know or ignore, is that even if you have raised it for twenty years, the falcon will not return to you when you release it, even if it was dying, when it is full. Unless he is hungry. This is because he has great pride, so that he lives on no one and submits to no one, for his stomach is the one that keeps him with his owner. This is the quality that made our people hold on to the falcon and made it their emblem. Nothing brings him back to you except his hunger. He returns to no one but that he can be tamed and becomes unwild. But if he flies when he is full, he will not return to you. If you want him to return, look for him, and if you find him, leave him until he is hungry. When he is hungry, he will come back to you, so call him and he will come to you. Try to release the falcon when he is full, then leave him until he gets tired and he will not return to you. This quality has endeared the falcon to us, and he has become our emblem.

Falcons have certain seasons, so they wake up in summer. I had a falcon I wanted to keep in the summer, but my father 'may God have mercy



on him' prevented me, and ordered me to release it, saying, 'Is there anyone who spends for a falcon, what is this falcon you spend a whole year for? Now people are used to keeping rare falcons that are quick, and they let them stay. Nowadays, there are farms and many things related to falcons have come into being. The situation is different and falcons are not left alone. Falcons that are of no use are set free. What do you want from a falcon that does not hunt? You do not need to feed him and he does not feed you. Our ancestors did not keep falcons, no matter what it was, because they did not need to take care of the falcon for an entire year. Perhaps one or two sheikhs had falcons or an expensive falcon that stayed with them and made them happy. Our early honorable sheikhs, princes and sultans used to go hunting, even if it was not during the hunting season. They go hunting in the neighboring countries, and keep falcons during the seasons. This is a rare thing, and the common practice with falcons is that they are used for hunting in the winter, because they could not dive in the winter. It is cold. Migratory falcons come to us in the winter and pass us by, and they can be kept and hunted. Winter brings out what the falcon can hunt, rabbits. The falcons find what they can hunt at this time in winter, but there is nothing to hunt in the heat. You cannot hunt in this heat. An Emirati proverb says that the Arabs move less during this time in the summer because of the great heat (your rabbit will not leave, and your family will stay here).

The falcon was a part of people's lives and had a special job. Not everyone knew how to hunt and care for falcons. The few who cared for falcons were mostly Bedouins and were not from the city. The Bedouin needs falcons to meet his daily needs because he hunts with falcons, perhaps to get his lunch. He hunts with falcons to bring his family a sand grouse or something else to live on. They hunt sand grouse and pigeons, and no

falcon can catch a sand grouse because they are fast.

The falcon was a means of feeding the people. It had a specific task for a specific time of the year. In fact, people lived on falcons, and it was not an easy life and it was important. It fulfilled a certain purpose. Hunting helped people to continue living in this area. It was like the other pillars of life. But it is not in any substantial proportion. I can do without the falcons, but not the camels. Nor can I do without the cattle or the ships. Perhaps you could replace the falcon with something else, but the falcon plays a significant part in our social life. The falcon was one of the best things. We mention him in our poems and in our upbringing of him. We mention his upbringing and praise his fine qualities and his pride and that he does not submit his head to anyone and that he eats from his own hunt and feeds you, too. There were also hunting dogs, but people refuse to eat what they hunt, so the greyhound or saluki is trained to hunt and trained not to stick his fangs into prey. If he sticks his fangs in the prey, they do not take it and leave it for him, and maybe the man ate dog's hunt. However, women don't eat after the dog, for women resent and hate it, even though people were sometimes hungry in those days. So, the falcon feeds itself and feeds its owner. There is great value in the falcon hunting to feed itself and to feed you. Most people give the falcon the head of the prey, and the rest is taken by the owner of the falcon. Our ancestors taught us that if anyone gives you a drop of water in a cup, you should not forget his favor. This favor that he has shown you to drink water, you do not forget. So how about he feeds you and satisfies your hunger. They compare it to fear and this is in the Qur'an where God Almighty said: (He who feeds them against hunger and gives them security from fear.) [Quraysh: 4]. Feed them against hunger, for hunger was very great among the Arabs. Some had to sell their children because they were hungry. The

falcon that feeds me has a high value among our people because it hunted and fed them. Try to release it once to hunt, then carry it when it comes back. It will stand still or do nothing, so you can simply take the hunt or the prey out of its claws. It does not mind this and does nothing. This comes from its generosity, kindness and morality.

The falcon has more morality than other animals, making it dear to us and a symbol of heritage. I call it a symbol of national identity, just like Al Eqal (a braid of wool or silk wrapped around the headdress 'Ghutra'). It is an official thing that represents me. Likewise, the falcon in its majesty represents me, its pride represents me, its generosity represents me, its beautiful form represents me. The glory that is within it when it stands, with its head held high, you do not feel that it is a falcon. It differs from other birds, nothing is more beautiful than it. Even a peacock is not more beautiful. There is nothing more beautiful in the world. The falcon makes you happy and proud. He gives you amazing social strength. Princes, sultans, sheikhs and kings carry it on their hands. The most beautiful picture of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God have mercy on him, was when he stood with the falcon in his hand and being proud of it. The falcon is a symbol of the country's national identity. We do not want to address the problems of the falcon and what happens to it. If any part of its feathers breaks, it loses balance. When a feather breaks, the falcon is disturbed. This is because its composition is amazing and nothing is faster than a falcon. Its eyes are sharp; they see well. There is nothing like it in this regard. The falcon has been associated with our people since ancient times. They respect, cherish and care for it and can tell the good and the bad ones.

As we said, our ancestors loved the Saker Falcon more than the Shaheen. That's why you see our emblem is full of the Saker Falcon. Why? Because

it has a beautiful nature. If one, two or three days go by and it finds nothing to hunt and you do not find for it anything to hunt, it does not change. It stays the same as you trained him. It does not get skinny or weaker; he stays standing. As for the shaheen, if you do not feed it for a day, even if you cover him up, it cuts off the robe that prevents it from flying. It may even fly with its head covering. Most of the falcons that fly, do so with their burqa (head covering) on. Many of the people whose falcon flies over them while they are wearing the burqa, hit the ground for it until it comes down, because it flies without seeing. One of the most critical things I remember is that early people were very cautious not to leave the robes tied to the falcon, because if the falcon flies with them and gets away from you, it goes away and does not come back. It may fall on a fruit tree or a Ghaf tree. The threads of the robes get tangled, then it gets stuck there. The falcon can do nothing. All falcons that get stuck on the robes in such cases, for example, on electricity poles remain stuck.

There is a beautiful piece of information that our early people taught us. They say if a falcon flies away from you and you do not know where it flew, look for it in the north. Falcons travel against the air. In fact, when falcons leave us, we look for them in the north and bring them back. This was a custom among men in this matter, that when a falcon flew, they did not take it, but informed of spotting it. We know every falcon has an owner and is dear to him. When the falcon flies, it takes the air or wind with its breast and flies against the air. Nowadays, in falcon competitions or tournaments, we take the falcons against the direction of the air, because, as they say, the falcon comes into the air with its breast and opens its wings. It does not fly against the current.

These are the beautiful qualities of the falcon, which have endeared it to us for its attitude, style, generosity, and pride. Much as I teach and

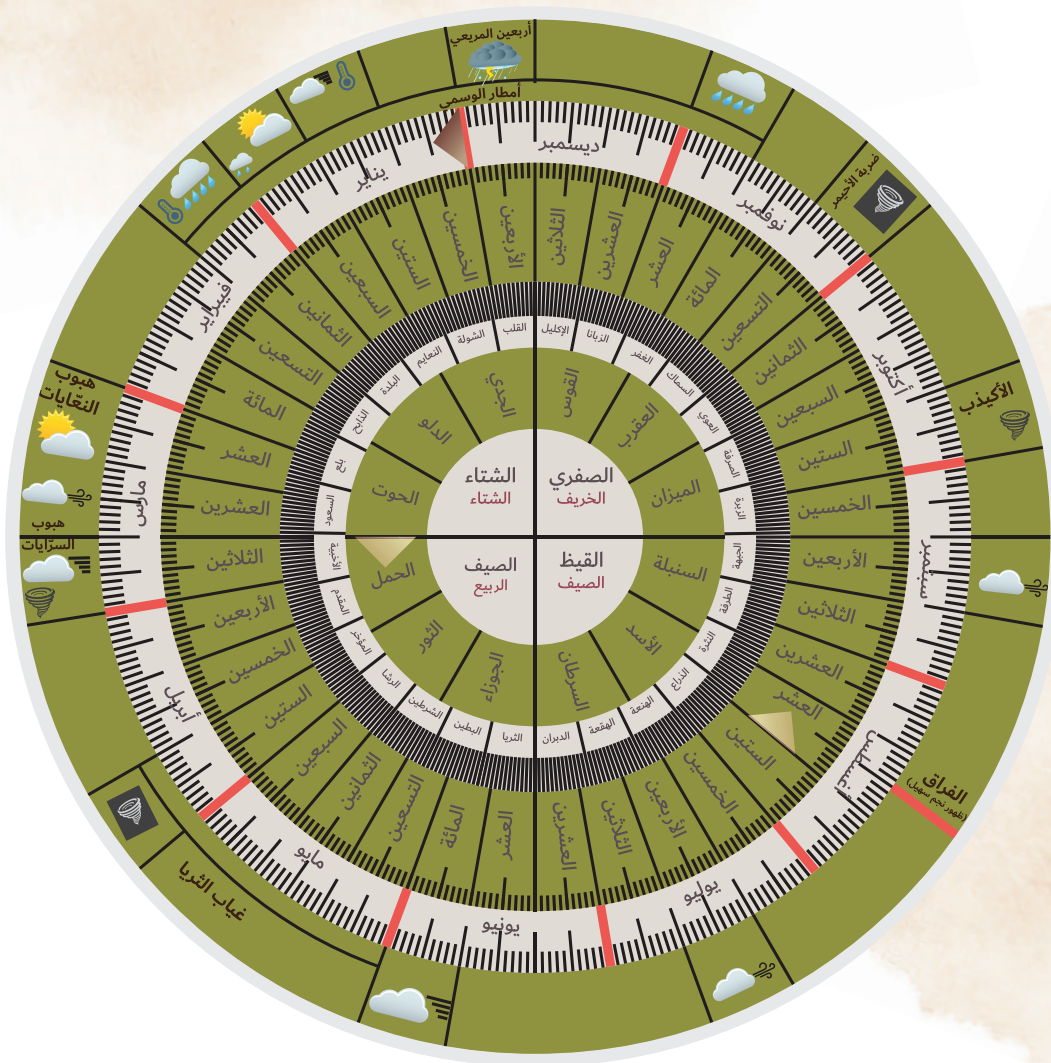
discipline the falcon, except that when it is full, he will not return to you. That is one of the beautiful things about it. The second quality is that it helps feed houbara to people, so people could live on that in those days because they did not have guns. We are talking about 1902 here, so if I had bullets, I do not think I'd shoot a houbara with them. If I did, where would I get the bullets that I fired? The falcon has done service to the first in this. The houbara comes once a year. It is the food of men. The falcon is the one who provides men with their food. The falcon has a great affiliation with us and is a symbol of identity. Its beautiful qualities were the focus of our poems and called us to make it a symbol of our literature and identity. We will not give it up throughout our lives. Rather, we preserve it, as well as our government, for the services he has rendered us in life in the past. Today, we return to it the favor it has done us, and we set it before us as a symbol of our beloved country.

I hope that this has given us valuable information about this part of the UAE's tradition. I hope that, God willing, we have been able to describe something that has a social connection to our society in the UAE, touches our national identity and represents us. I hope we have given some insights from which we can all benefit.

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# Al Droor

'A traditional forecast method'



# Al Droor 'A traditional forecast method'



One of the traditional things we learned from our ancestors, which most societies used to deal with, is Al Droor, an old UAE weather forecast system. We hear about them these days, but we do not know them well. Today I will try to explain their significance to you. What is the meaning of a particular 'Dar', a section of Al Droor prediction method which comprises 10 days. What does 'Tawal'a', omens, mean?

I will give you a simple overview of Al Droor to get to know them. If a person does not know something, he may not be interested in it. However, when he knows it, he can start delving into it.

All societies used Al Droor, not just us. Even our ancient travels were based on them, as was agriculture, treatment of animals, cupping and moxibustion (marking), even shearing the wool of cattle, including sheep and camels. The question is, how did they calculate Al Droor?

I will try to explain it simply so you can understand what someone means when he says, for example, we are at seventy or eighty. Do not be taken aback and ask how we became eighty.

In fact, the matter is simpler than you might expect. For example, if a young man is going to the sea to fish and we ask him to take us with him, he might have replied that it is not suitable to go to the sea today because the sea has high waves. So, if we had asked him when it was right, he might have said that the waves will be lower in two weeks and then we can go in the afternoon because morning is not right because the water in the sea is hot in the morning. There are water currents 'Sayora' under the water, and perhaps he told you then that it is not suitable to go out

to fish, because the sea is (Dalkh), i.e. has a different color and is not clear, and that 'Al-Bilad', the piece of lead tied to the rod (Al-Midar) does not go down to the bottom of the sea because the bottom of the sea is turbulent. What is the meaning of all this?

Everything he has said means he is a man who has experience of the sea, and that there are seasons when the sea is suitable for fishing and others when it is not. Perhaps someone has told you that in those days, for example, you cannot catch naiser/blackspot snapper. Therefore, it's not suitable to set a net because the naiser has eggs in its belly (hibl, meaning pregnancy) during these days and we let it lay eggs during this time of year and then we fish it. Maybe he told you we catch the naiser when it has a fat pregnancy in its belly, i.e. a lot of eggs.

This is related to the experience of the sea. They have to do with Al Droor, which our people maintained. Pople knew Al Droor well when they traveled on the sea, for example. Perhaps someone has told you I will not travel these days. We have reached seventy, even if it was over the waters of the Gulf, for the ocean is turbulent. So, at this time of year it is not suitable for travel.

Let's count Al Droor. Let's say the year has three hundred and sixty-five days, or sometimes less than that.

Let's count the three hundred and sixty-five days and divide it into ten days for each 'Dar' or section. You hear them tell you in the winter we are in the eighties, and also between summer and winter. Then also in the summer, so what does eighty mean?

We find that Al Droor starts from Suhail and end in Suhail as well. Our people used to call it the Divider, because it divides between summer and winter. The time of sunset progresses successively at the time of its occurrence and then delays. So what happens? This means that the

winter is long at night and the day is shorter, and it is cold. So, what happens? Suhail shows up in the middle of the year and splits it in two. Suhail is not the one that makes the weather cool. It is just a star that rises at that time, regardless of the western calculation. Ten and eight, sixteen, seventeen or twenty-two. We may not know exactly when it will appear, but when it does, Al Droor calculations begin. Let us suppose it appeared on the twentieth of August. We have twelve months in the year, so we have three hundred and sixty days, and that means three hundred and sixty sections. If we put it at ten, then the tenth of Suhail comes, then the twentieth, then the thirtieth, and so we complete one month. Then the tenth, twentieth, and thirtieth, then we complete two months. In this way, we have reached the twentieth of September, then the twentieth of October, and then a month after that. So, we have ten, twenty, then thirty, then it becomes ninety, and thus we have reached the ninety of Suhail. We will have reached the eleventh month. This means that we are now entering winter, so we can now light a fire to keep warm. In the tenth month, no one would light a fire because the weather is good. A person can sleep outside, in the open air 'Al Khala'a'. In the tenth month begins that which is called 'Sifri. In these days we call it autumn or fall, the ten proceeding from Suhail, then the twenty, and then the thirty. These thirty are of Suhail as if it were a month, so we have a hundred in all three months, and the extra ten days move to the second hundred, or they are in between. We move from these ten days to a hundred and consider them the first farewell, the farewell of the heat, summer. During this time, it remains hot, for the temperatures are in the forties and above, but the night is pleasant.

I tell you about Al Droor, which I did not understand very well before. I understood it in this way. I say, we have from ten to a hundred, three

months and ten days. Then we enter winter, when 'Sifri' ends, i.e. autumn. That is the end of summer, the end of heat. We enter winter at the beginning of the eleventh month or in the first ten days of the eleventh month, then we enter the hundred for the winter. So, it becomes the ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, and eighty. This means that there are three months, the eleventh and twelfth, then the first and second months. At this time, the cold intensifies, and is called the cold of the eighties. Some also call it the cold of the elderly. Then comes the last hundred before the beginning of summer or the heat. Suhail shows its intensity in the eighth month, when the first hundred are gone. Thus, it continues until the eighth month, which is for six months, with two months remaining. This is the second hundred, which lasts six months or a little less, so there are sixty (sixty Droor) left. The ten, twenty, and thirty, until we reach Suhail, and the separation takes place, and the true heat begins. So, the calculations are from one to seventy, then the first hundred, then the second hundred, then the third hundred, in which it is hot. Then in the middle comes the other sixty, and the intense summer begins, and the separation takes place again (summer begins and winter ends).

The calculation of Al Droor in the Emirates is like the calculation of the days. From the eighth month, Suhail, whom they call the divider or separator, appears. The separation changes for us from the eighth, ninth, and tenth months. They include the tenth, twentieth, thirtieth, fortieth, fiftieth, and sixtieth, then something occurs which they call (Al-Ukaytheeb), which brings a little cold. The end of the ninth month and the beginning of the tenth month belong to the seasons in which, for example, there are many clouds. If rain falls in the ten days of the first Suhail, the whole winter will be rainy. It will be at the beginning of the

tenth of the sixtieth when Al-Ukaytheb appears, then in the ninetith before the hundredth a wind will blow over us, which they call the blow of (al-Auhymar). These are the terms used by the Bedouins. They differ from the urban names, so you find that with these you enter the sign of the Leo or the Ten, and you enter the Virgo and Libra. After that, the Scorpion comes to you. Then it is the other well-known tawal'a 'omens'. Then 'Al Saifri' enters the fiftieth of Suhail and rises in the thirty-second hundredth and stops with us because winter enters the fortieth of the second hundredth, that is in the twelfth month, and perhaps it is in the half of the twelfth month when winter begins. The severe winter comes in the last twenty of the last hundred of the third month when the cold leaves us, so you won't need to start a fire anymore. In the second forty the rain comes and they call it 'Al-Wasmi'. Then something comes which they call 'Arbaeen Al-Marai'I'. There are those who call it so, the people of the coast, not the Bedouins. In the penultimate hundred comes in what is called 'Annayat', a kind of wind. Finally, before we begin again, comes (Ghyab Al-Thuraya). It will be on the seventieth of the penultimate hundred and on the seventieth and eightieth we will see what we call Ghyab Al Thuraya. So, the calculation of Al Droor is three hundred and sixty days. Every ten days is called a 'Dar'. We only cut the date palms on the tenth day of Suhail or the thirtieth day of the ninth month, and that is the season of palm cutting.

There are those who say that nowadays you cannot plant tomatoes when you want to, rather you have to plant them at the right time until they germinate, unless planted greenhouses. The same goes for sweet potatoes 'fendal' and the common potatoes, which you must plant in their season to get good production. Also, watermelons and melons should not be planted in the summer, but in the winter. Then harvest their fruit in the



summer, that is the law of agriculture. If you plant them in summer, they will not yield and will spoil. Likewise, if you want to brand (the camel), for example, then you must brand it in season. If you want to do it off-season, the burn will not heal and will worsen. Also, if you are cauterizing a person, it must be in an appropriate season. Cupping as well must be done in an appropriate season for a person to benefit. The situation has now changed. Now we have antibiotics, but before that, any operation that you do has to be done at an appropriate time of year for it to be successful. So, we have here practical practices that have to do with people's business. That's why we care about Al Droor. So, you may not fish when the waves are high. That is one of the simplest things. It's nice to know all Al Droor and their details.

For example, how do people know that 'Sifri' has come? They know it by the scent of the roses. The 'Barm' plant in the desert has a fragrance in the Sifri. The past people knew this very well. As for us, we are not desert people. We know it by the change in the scents of the trees.

For example, if we want camels to mate, we do so at the eleventh month, until the female carries her fetus for twelve months and gives birth to it at a suitable time. If someone keeps antelopes, for example, you find they mate in the second, third or fourth month, even if they are left to each other yet they mate at that time of the year. They mate during that period of the year. Some of them carry for four or six months, depending on the species. As for chickens, their eggs come only at a certain time between winter and summer, otherwise they spoil. There is a certain 'Dar' that helps to keep them well, and everything has a Dar that suits it. It is good to know Al Droor, not only because it is a part of tradition, but to benefit from them in our lives.

The best method for Al Droor is to divide the year into three hundred

and sixty days, or thirty-six parts. Each part has four parts, which are one hundred, one hundred, one hundred and sixty. You go by them and know when the heat is going to come. However, there were also terrible years when there were severe poisonings, so we became tired due to heat. We do not know that the 'Al Siham' season makes the date palm and the fruits ripe. In 'Al Siham' season, people do not go out and in a certain season people do not sit in the sun when it is very harmful, but you will not feel it. Even some animals turn kind of white in the desert because of the sweltering heat. People avoid heat stroke during this time because they might get sick and die from it. Now things have changed a lot. There are antibiotics that ripen the date palm. The municipality can plant any street with palm trees at any time by giving fertilizers and chemicals. However, for us in the houses, it is good to plant at the right time. Not every seedling planted in Suhail season will die, maybe 1% of them will die. Most trees are planted in the eleventh month, like blueberry and others, in the ninetieth of the first part in Al-Droor, which is the hundred. The parts or sections are distributed like that. Al Droor has nothing to do with the stars, but is specific calculations and omens. They are social details that fitted these times and you can benefit from them. For example, if no one can go fishing and the waves are high, they will not kill themselves for the sake of the fish, but will have patience and replace the fish with dried fish, for example. You find that there is no fish you want in the fish market at this time. You rarely find fresh fish, but there are large boats that freeze the fish well and sell it. Maybe that's why we do not feel it, but a while back, twenty years ago, the fish disappeared from the market for a week and we felt it.

These are the calculations of Al Droor. Many have made a diagram for us. It is all true, for the calculations differ from land, sea, and mountain

regions. The calculations are different in other countries. Saudi Arabia has a different calculation for Al Droor, as do Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman. Each has a different one. The arrangement is different. The planting of seedlings is different here than in Oman, which has many places. The mountains on the interior side, towards Sur, and the calculations are different. The people of Al-Batinah, who are close to us, have other calculations. The people of Muscat have other calculations, so does Saudi Arabia. The people of the sea in Jeddah differ in their calculations from the people of Dammam, according to the nature of the land, the salinity of the water in the soil, and the humidity of the air. There is a seedling that grows in the eastern region and does not grow in the western region. Al Droor is a beautiful and simple thing. We hold on to it and work according to it. We know that we have three main sections now, a hundred, a hundred and a hundred. When you are told that it is seventy or eighty in the winter, it means that it is the strong seventy, which differs from the seventy of summer. Sifri is coldest. Of course, we do not have autumn or spring in the true sense, but we hold on to it even when the leaves have not fallen. In some places in the south it is called 'Kharaf', not 'Khareef' autumn.

I hope that I have been able to give you good information that will be useful to us and to you. May God grant us, God willing, and you, the ability to hold on to our beautiful heritage by which we live and through which we develop and strengthen. In doing so, we are in a better and brighter place every day, God willing.







# Al Makanat 'Places'



# Al Makanat 'Places'



Our places in the United Arab Emirates have their distinctive names, as in the rest of the world. They are named after their geographical nature. Indeed, we have strange names for our places. If we examine them and pay close attention to them, we find they are not accidental. Every name has a meaning, a value and a justification. When we give people their names, we give them names like Saeed and Ahmad, and maybe you are named after your father. They name Ahmed for those who expect good from him, or they call him 'Musbah' if he is born in the morning. These are their beliefs. As for places and countries, they named them according to their geographical nature. Let us talk about the subject of names. For example, if you pay close attention, you will find the names related to the sea, I mean the areas. It starts with the saif, the beach, then changes and changes until it reaches the mountain, then goes beyond the mountain and reaches the sea from the other side, as it goes on the topography. Rashidiya, for example, was named after Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed (may God have mercy on him). There was no housing there before, and Sheikh Rashid was the one who ordered it to be built. He ordered it to be built and distributed to the people. It is opposite Dubai airport, and a resident suggested naming it after Sheikh Rashid. The Ahmadiyya school, for example, was named after the famous Ahmed bin Dalmouk: 'May his soul rest in peace.' Not all areas are like that, there are some names that are not appropriate for areas. When we go to Rashidiya, we find it is surrounded by dunes on all sides. There is Nad Rashid, Nad al-Hammar and Nad Shamma which are all sand dunes, these are just examples. So

how about we go back to the sea a little, for example, we find Khor Dubai, and in Abu Dhabi, you find Khor Ghanaza, then you go to Khor Fakkan and Khor Khuwair. The focus in naming was on the creek (Khor). When you leave the creek, you find what they call Al-Barahah, for example. Then comes the theme of the trees 'edian', 'oud', a group of trees, or hoor (Marsh). There is one oud that I remember to this day, and it is a ghaf oud. If it's just one, it's called a ghafa. If there is a Ghaf tree which stands far away and to which people go and return, it is called Al-Wahida (the lone tree) because it is solitary. It stands by itself, nothing is near it. Then you come out of the creek to Al Baraha, then to the Hoor, then to the Oud, then we ascend to the Arqoub. There is Arqoub siba'a in Al Khawaneej. Then we reach the Nad (high sand hill). When you come to Rashidiya, you will find a Nad, because there are many Nads. Each one has a particular name, and the whole area is a Nad, but there is a Nad that is named in a special way. For example, they say that Nad Shamma is high, or there was a woman who lived on that side whose name was Shamma. People remember her and know her. If the Nad is called Nad al-Hamr, it means it is red or its soil is red, but the soil is not red there as far as I know. The sand here is not red in this area of Umm Ramool and Rashidiya. Then we go to the south and after the area of Faqaa red sand comes to you. If Nad al-Hamar means something red, then what is red, maybe al-Damani, a red antelope, and al-homr (may God honor you) means wild donkeys. Some call them homor (wild donkey whose name in Arabic sound like the word red). Perhaps the man was called Hamar, red, because his color was red. There are people who have a red color. Then next to the nad we find what is called hoor, and then the arqoub. They say the so-and-so-arqub, and there are other names for places. For example, we have Mushrif, perhaps because it is an area

that overlooks the land, and then Mirdif (supporter) next to Mushrif, which is called that because it supports the other surrounding area. This is because it is inhabited by people and you can find wells or what is called al-Tawi in these places. All places have tawi (wells) or bidas (oasis with wells). People sometimes say so and so bida (innovation in this context). It means the poem of so and so, so they consider the poem as something innovative because it is beautiful. If it is good, they say bida (innovative), so they say: can you bida (innovate) two beautiful lines of poetry for us. Bida is something pure. In Abu Dhabi they say so and so bida, like Bida Saif (name of a place). Saif could be the one who ordered the digging of the well or dug it himself. They say Mankhool, a well in Dubai, is the name of the well itself, not the land. The land is referred to as Mankhoola. This was said by our ancestors who lived next to the well. Why the well is called Mankhool, we do not know and I do not know but it is called Mankhool.

We have Al-Araqib (high dunes), tawi (well), oud (group of trees) and hoor (marsh), then we find Khuraima, then a valley. Marshes differ from the valleys. The valley does not have to be in a mountain. The valley is sometimes between two high dunes, between which there is no small area, because the small area is a marsh like Khor Al-Anz. It is a marsh so called because Al-Anz is the name of a horse. It is said that she was there and died near it. The Khurimah is a large lowland, but it is closed on all sides. The valley is open on both sides and closed on two sides. If we say that north and south are closed, then east and west are open. As for Al-Khuraimah, it is closed and can only be closed from three places or from three sides. Al-Khuraimah is low between the Al-Araqib as if it were a big pit, and it is a wide but closed place. For example, if you take a road like Emirates Road today and go to an area called Al Zubair in the past

and then go to Ras Al Khaimah, you will find a high dune on your left side, and you find that this high dune is called a valley because it is filled with ghaf trees and it extends along the road. There are many valleys like Wadi Al-Ayas in Dubai and Wadi Al-Amdi and these are the valleys that we observe. I live in them; I go to them and I come to them. There are many valleys, high dunes and clusters of trees. Then you go and come to Al-Saih, then you come to Al-Batha, Battah and then Sioh (desert areas). You will notice that the names of valleys, Ouds and Arqoub change, then you come to Nahda, Nakda, Mirdif and Mishrif. As for the places, they differ from one place to another. The names of these places are based on the geographical terrain.

When you have finished with the 'Araqib and the Eidan (group of trees), you will come to the Sayouh, and you will also find the Yerf, which is a rough place. Then comes the sand which is called 'Heyul', and then you will find Nad Al Sheba there. It may be called that because it contains a lot of Sheba, but it is a high sand hill. The Arqoub (high dune) has an incision, it is cut off, and there is sand. The Nad has sand or a notch, and it is big and high. Maybe you can climb it in a car. The Arqoub cannot be climbed by car, even though it is small. From all this, we conclude that there are areas called al-Batah and al-Suyuh, and what is called al-Dahl are included in all this. We also have Bida (oases with wells) and al-Tawis (wells), which are also found everywhere in the mountains. When we reach the mountainous areas, we find the Jarn, the isolated mountain, at the beginning. It can be one, two or three isolated mountains. An example of this is the Jarn al-Bint in Muzayra and in Rawda. There is also a place or area called Jarn, Jarn al-Bint. We find out that this area was called Jarn al-Bint because people kidnapped a girl and ran away with her. This was many years ago. When they arrived at this place, they

sensed those who were pursuing them, and they were the girl's people. When they stopped there, the girl ran away and hid in this mountain. She hid behind a large rock. When the kidnappers sensed her, they fled and called it Jarn Al-Bint. We will not talk about why the Jarn or the horn was given that name. It is the horn of this donkey and this is the horn of this and that. Each Jarn or Horn was named for a specific reason. Now we go to the Suyoh, then to the Batha, then we enter the Jarn, after that we reach Ain and Ghail, then we reach Ogda, a collection of Ghaf and Simr (*Acacia tortilis*) trees found in one place. They have named the regions according to their geography and nature, and this information is good to know. For example, if you were told that so and so is sih, you would know that it is hard land and not soft sand. If someone tells you they live in so and so Sih, you know that they and their family are from so and so Sih or Batha. Batha is a valley that flows. If it is called a Jarn, we know it is so and so Jarn. When it says Nad, we know that the place is full of Nads. This information shows you how our people have named these places in amazing ways. The naming of places ranges from the sea to the mountains. There are springs, ghilan (water left behind after a flood), dams, valleys and bitah. They may or may not have battah, I do not know. Al-Battah needs a place where the water flows because the land is different, neither soft nor hard. As for Abu Dhabi, they have more khiran (streams). Abu Dhabi, the Empty Quarter and the West have different names because their geographical topography is different. They have Ghayut, Jaayd, Yuan, Khayur and Sabakh. In the same way, we have Sabakh in Dubai. If you go out a little bit, they will tell you that this is so and so Sabkha. In Abu Dhabi, they have different names until they reach the mountains on the last side of Al Ain. Their names differ, and they have, as we said, the ghyut and others, and most of them use

the word bida (well) instead of tawy. The names of the places they have are very beautiful, and indicate a rich and luxuriant heritage, as do our names. They say so and so Sih and so and so Jarn, and that means that they live there. Our people have lived there since this land existed, since the Arabs split up and each of them went to a different place. We are here. This shows that we have a heritage and that the earth has existed since time immemorial. We are no different from the greatest countries in the world, and with that I hope I was able to convey good and beautiful information that you can benefit from. You can also continue to search and look ahead and pull out information for us that we can benefit from and that will also benefit our children, God willing, because our heritage is beautiful and rich.

# Conclusion



There is no doubt that documenting, recording and preserving cultural heritage is a national responsibility. Heritage is the origin and the roots. We must preserve it. The rich information collected and presented in this book is the continuation of the journey and tireless and fruitful efforts of the Hamdan Bin Mohammed Heritage Center (HHC) to preserve the authentic heritage of the UAE and pass it on to future generations and other peoples and cultures.



# Biography and Journey



**Abdullah Hamdan Bin Dalmook** was born in Dubai in 1969. He started his life like any other Emirati. He spent his early school years in Al Shab and Al Jaehdh schools. He completed his secondary education at Badr School and then went to Oxford University in the US where he studied political science.

In 1988, he started working in the Ministry of Interior in the field of policing.

He was assigned to manage the heritage and diving villages in Al Shindagha and became their manager in 1996. In 2004, he was appointed as the Executive Director of the Crown Prince's Tournaments Office, until 2013. In 2013, **H.H. Sheikh Hamdan bin Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum** issued a decree to establish the Hamdan Bin Mohammed Heritage Center (HHC) and appointed him as the CEO of the HHC.

In 2017, **H.H. Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum** amended the previous decision and appointed him as the CEO of the HHC.

He headed many committees that conducted official festivals and supervised several heritage TV shows associated with **His Highness of the Crown Prince of Dubai**, in Dubai Media Incorporated.

**Abdullah Bin Dalmook** is a UAE heritage expert authorized by the Cabinet.



مركز حمدان بن محمد لإحياء التراث  
HAMDAN BIN MOHAMMED HERITAGE CENTER

