



The Sharjah Centre  
for Cultural Communication  
مركز الشارقة  
للتواصل الثقافي

Emirati women worked alongside men in many handicrafts, and these crafts were vital industries that shaped up the strength of economy. Many industries were directly related to the sea, which was a main source of living, and other sources of crafts were used from the desert, and mountains by the fathers and grandfathers.

UAE  
TRADITIONAL CRAFT







## CRAFTS FOR MEN

## Pearl Diving

The UAE has been famous for pearl diving since a long time, as the profession of pearl diving was one of the first important profession practiced by the people of the UAE, besides fishing and an important source of livelihood for many families. The general population of the UAE relied heavily on pearl fishing, as this trade was considered their economic strength, but with the advent of oil, the pearl industry diminished until it ended completely, and everything related to it became a memory.







## A perilous Journey

It is a perilous journey that divers undertake in the search of the white jewel, after saying goodbye to their loved ones. Once the pearl fishing ship, which is called "Al-Hairat", arrives at the pearl site, the Naham raises his voice, then the preparations and work begins.

The diver carries his tools, then descends to the bottom of the sea, as soon as he arrives, he starts collecting oysters and shells and puts them in the basket. After a few minutes, he moves the hand, and the crew pulls him up to the surface of the sea, and then he descends again and so on for a period of time. The work may take two hours or more, for the diver and for the rest of the crew, the work continues. After completing this work, the diver

Al Ghawas climbs on the surface of the ship at the time of the noon prayer, after that everyone eats lunch, then rest and sleep.

After waking up, the diver may descend again to the bottom of the sea, or he may remain on the ship, and another stage of work begins, which is the splitting of the oysters carried out by Al-Seeb and Al-Jalasah Al-Yalasa, and the cooperation of the whole crew until the sun sets.





## Shipbuilding (Al Jalafa)

The building of ships and traditional wooden boats, which is called Al-Jalafa or Al-Qalafa in the local Emirati dialect, represents one of the oldest professions in the Arab Gulf states, as it emerged from the people's need for a means to help them seek a livelihood. It was in use for fishing and searching of pearls, as well as trading with the inhabitants of the nearby coasts of Iran, the Indian subcontinent, and Africa.

Due to the strategic location of the Emirates on the coast of the Arabian Gulf and the length of its coasts, Al-Jalafa has spread in all its coastal cities, and has remarkably flourished, to become a center for sending Al-Alasated, which is, the heads of the Jalalif, who represent the sea masters, to neighboring countries to benefit from their inherited experiences without Academic education. The UAE has become a center of attraction for the major merchants of those countries to build ships for them, which crowned this profession and made it among the main.





## Fishing

The sons of the Emirates knew different methods of fishing, which he developed from the materials of the environment surrounding him to fulfill his need of fish for food and trade and to obtain an income for his family. He was able to catch fish during all seasons using his own tools, which he developed and made from special materials to facilitate the fishing process and make it an entertaining sport at the same time. The fisherman chooses his tools according to the type of fish he wants to catch and the most important methods and tools for traditional fishing in the UAE are:





## Gargoor

Gargoor is a dome shaped fish trap made of metal mesh wire with a funnel shaped entrance allowing easy access for fish at the front, it narrows as it sinks inward, to facilitate the slide of the fish inside, so it remains trapped inside the gargoor. The Gargoor is baited with bread and dried sardine and placed on the sea bottom for 1-2 weeks, with a long rope tied at its top, with a buoy that floats above the water surface to indicate its location.

It was made of palm fronds, then it developed and now is made of metal wires, and became a preferred tool for fishermen in rocky and muddy marine areas where fishing nets are difficult to use.





## Al-Hadra

It is one of the ways of fish that require effort, as fishing timings in it are not fixed, and is controlled by the tides at the beginning of the night and sometimes at the end. It s placed near the coast at a depth of about 3 meters, and when the tide is low, the fisherman walks towards it to collect the gathered fish, which have entered with the high tide through an opening facing the shore.





## Alhadaq

It is catching fish using fishing hook, and there are different types of it: Hadaq Al-Bahr , which is entering by boat in the open sea and then fishing, and there is Hadaq Al-Raqq which is fishing in shallow water, and there is Hadaq Al-Saif which is sitting on the beach and throwing the fishing thread into the sea, etc.





## Alyarroof

It is carried out by two people who are about 25 meters far from each other, holding two poles fixed at the ends of a net about the height of a man. They walk in to the sea, and whatever fish encounters them enters the net. This is considered one of the oldest fishing methods known to civilizations in the world.





## Pottery

The pottery industry is one of the oldest traditional industries in the Emirates, that forms a link with the modern Emirati man, and provides researchers with information about the historical succession of the ancient civilizations of the Emirates, as it is one of the oldest and most enduring human civilizational exploits.

Various tools that were used by the Emiratis in the past and still are in some places, are made of pottery, some of these tools are Al-Yahla and Al-Hob, which are used for cooling water, and Khars for storing dates, in addition to, plates, pots, and ovens. Clay extracted from mountains and valleys is used as a raw material in making pottery due to its ability to withstand fire, then it is softened, which helps to sift and clean it, then its mixed with water well, as the impurities are extracted during mixing. The clay is left to solidify, then the manufacturer forms it the way he wants. The basic materials of the product can be adapted according to the purpose for which it is made, for example, sand is added to the clay mixture to make the water jars contain a greater number of pores.









## Wicker making (Al Sefafa)

The Wicker industry is one of the handicrafts that the Emirati women practiced in the past in order to achieve self-sufficiency in life tools to facilitate the necessities of a living and make them accessible to all members of society. The Al Sefafa is the weaving of palm wicker, as it is cleaned and sliced, and each bundle of it is dyed, after that, it is soaked in water to soften and facilitate its braiding. The women braid the wicker and intertwine them with each other; trimming the excess until its ready to use in making different tools such as baskets, felts, clips, sacks, mats, and others.







## Sadu Knitting

Sadu weaving represented the queen of crafts that depended on simple materials and tools. It is spun from camel hair and the wool of goats and sheep, which is stretched on the Al Nool machine, which is made of wooden or iron pegs in a rectangular shape. Al Manshaza is a rectangular piece of wood with two sharp ends and is used to pave the threads after their formation.

The wool threads are stretched on the Nool after it is twisted on the spindle to obtain the threads used for weaving the Sadu rug. In the past, colors were limited to white, black and red, but with the passage of time other colors began to be introduced, such as green, orange, yellow and others.

In the past, Emirati women used dyes extracted from desert herbs. The aesthetics of the Sadu pieces lie in their preservation of their natural colors. Al-Sadu was used to make their tents, blankets, pillows, floor mats, and the camel sacks decoration.





## Talli making

This craft is known as Talli Bawadil, and Talli Batool. It is a narrow strips of textile with fine, elaborate patterns, created by twisting and braiding different strands of colored thread together. The Talli is made using (Al-Kajoujah); a metal tool used for embroidery consisting of a base in the form of two funnels with two rings supporting a circular cushion on which the golden or silver thread is wrapped for embroidery. Talli is used in designing all types of women garments, such as wedding dresses and dresses for special occasions or everyday use.





## Wool knitting

Wool knitting and weaving is one of the professions practiced by the grandmothers to reflect an honest image of the efforts spent to adapt to the desert environment, and the investments of making a good use of its natural resources.

The craft of knitting cotton and wool is made using a simple tool, called the spindle made of the branches and wood of local trees such as boxthorn, lote or sidr trees.

The spindle is considered the main weaving tool; made of smooth trimmed tree sticks, with a piece of iron on top called the hook. The main function of the spindle is to spin wool, cotton and goat hair and isolate it after trimming and cleaning. Then, locally handmade wool and cotton products are used.





## Burqa Making

The burqa was an integral part of the adornment and decency of Emirati women in the past, and older Emirati women still retain that cultural heritage by wearing the burqa, which may explain the survival of the profession of burqa making until this today. It is noteworthy that the burqa cloth was imported from India, and it was called sheil, and it was characterized by its thickness and almost paper-like in texture, in golden and copper colors.

The Nile dye with a very light smell is used to maintain the luster of the burqa, and it is used in the process of fixing the burqa on the head, and a red or silver thread is used, and recently golden, extending from the two ends of the burqa to be tied in a light knot behind the head, which achieves a tight stability

In the past, it was necessary for girls in Emirati society to wear the burqa starting from puberty or the marriage agreement with the aim of dignity and modesty, and because the burqa is an integral part of the general appearance of a woman, and an expression of her social and age status, it is classified in several forms, for example, a girl's burqa is wide-eyed, While the eye opening narrows and the forehead area increases in older women, it also differs in its colors between golden, copper and blackish-purple.



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