



Kingdom of Bahrain

***L'fjiri Nomination to the Representative List of the
Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity – Prepared by the
Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities***

Intangible Cultural Heritage National Inventory

Domains of Intangible Cultural Heritage

The intangible cultural heritage elements of the Kingdom of Bahrain have been categorized under five domains, in line with the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Please see the below summary list of the domains and the intangible cultural elements.

Domain 1: Oral traditions and expressions

Poetry

Folk Tales

Domain 2: Performing Arts

Lfjiri

Mrada

Alardah

The Art of Sound

Domain 3: Social practices and festivals

Pearling Festivals: al-Rakbah and al-Quffal

Majlis

Arabic Coffee

Hiya Biya

Girgaon

Bahraini Breakfast

Shitfa and Daqlah

Ijrah

Weddings in Cities

Weddings in Villages

Domain 4: Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe

Date Palm

Folk Medicine

Water management systems

Pearl Diving

Al-Hadrah

Falconry

Arabian Horses

Domain 5: Traditional crafts

Dhow Building

Pearl Jewelry

Pottery

Sword Making

Chest Making

Basket Weaving

Naseej

Thob Nashel

Dilal

Gold Jewelry

Arabic Calligraphy

Naqda

Kurar

Domain 2 – Performing Arts

1. Identification of the Element

Name of Element	Lfjiri (lif.jeeri)
Informative Title	Songs recalling memories of the pearling season
Registration no.	ICH/D2/01
Domain	Performing Arts
Community/ies Practicing	Pearling community
Location	Muharraq
Origins	L'fjiri is of Bahraini origins widely practiced in the island of Muharraq, though it is also practiced in other parts of the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula.
Still in Practice (Yes/No)	Yes
Practice Periods	In the past L'fjiri was practiced during the winter period, after the return of the diving crew from the pearling season.

Description
Lfjiri is a type of performing arts, performed by the pearl diving crew during the winter or offset season of the pearling; the pearling season is during the four months of summer from June to September, as a form of entertainment. However, since the fall of the pearling community and the dissolution of the pearl diving community, nowadays it is performed in traditional festivals and in Durs (sing.Dar); a property that includes a space for performances. Each group of performers has at least one Dar.

There are several categories performing arts that are classified as Lfjiri, each differs in the type of instruments they use and the rhythm they play. In every performance there are three segments that characterizes this tradition:

- Al-Jarhan: a high pitch tone used by the Naham (singer) in the start of the performance
- Al-Tanzeela: when the Jarhan ends the rest of the crew pick up the beat and start playing with a soft voice.
- Al-Nahma: is when the Naham picks up again and starts singing until the end of the performance.

There are two expressions that define the origins of the name of L'fjiri. One of these expressions refers to the arabic tafajara (تفجر) meaning outburst or explosion, i.e. the bursting of water from the ground, and in relation to the bursting of the state experienced by the pearl divers and crew members during the pearling season and their time at sea, which then accumulates all problems and issues faced within the society. This practice therefore becomes a solution to many problems experienced by this community. The second expression explains that the meaning of the word comes from the arabic word Fajir (فجر) meaning dawn, referring to the fact that this performance is practiced until dawn.

2. Characteristics of the Element

Material elements associated with the practice

The materials used in this type of performance are the following:

Drums:

- Tabl
- Tar
- Murwas

Other instruments:

- Zills: also known as finger cymbal is an instrument made from brass
- Jihal (sing. Jihla): type of pottery used as an instrument

Intangible elements associated with the practice

The intangible elements associated with this practice are the music and the lyrics used in the performance. The performers usually sit in a circular composition with the Naham, the vocalist, in the middle.

Formal approaches to transmission (education)

Group members gather to practice this element while delivering the art in its right form. The group member also selects the types of music that would appeal to the younger generation and create an awareness among them by going back to the materials produced such as video and audio recordings and other references. Furthermore, a group of practitioners mentioned that today the performance is being practiced more frequently as it is performed on a weekly basis due to the presence of the Dur (sing. Dar) in Muharraq and is being revitalized by the concerned community.

Informal approaches to transmission

In the past, the element was transmitted orally from one generation to the next, however today it is being transmitted in a more formal approach as practitioners need to understand the words being used in this art form as some words used are manipulated by the deletion or insertion of characters making the content difficult to understand today.

Customary practices governing the element

Lfjiri has an established set of rules that dictate the element, which fall into five branches. In each of these branches the performance starts with the Jarhan followed by the Tanzeela and ends with the Nahma. These branches are:

- Al-Bahri
- Al-Adsani
- Al-Hadadi
- Al-Makhoulfi
- Al-Hasawi

In Bahrain, the performances exhibit variations of Jarhans that distinguishes the way in which it is being practiced. Furthermore, many practitioners of the past have created new forms of Jarhan, which are still practiced today.

Particular languages or speech levels involved in the practice

This practice showcases diverse influences from across the region such as the Nestorian churches and Islam due to the political movements that has passed through this island over the course of its history. This led to the change in the customs and traditions of the people, which influenced the practice. However, the rhythms and musical elements are still being used to this day and it is preserved within the practice and the only thing that has changed are the words and lyrics to the music.

3. Individuals Groups and Organizations Involved in the Element

Practitioners and performers: social status, professional category and demographics

The practitioners were a group of pearl divers and other crew members who used to practice this art during the winter period during their return from the diving season. After the diving and pearl fishing professions were extinguished, the practice has been transferred to the descendants of these divers and crew members. Later, other groups entered this practice through their interactions and friendly relations with this community and their love for this type of music.

Other bearers of the element

Today other musicians use the art of Lfjiri in various ways, such as playing orchestral music through the tunes of Lfjiri. It is also being used widely in contemporary music.

Other custodians of the element

The Authority for Culture and Antiquities is the concerned party in safeguarding this practice, and it supports its practitioners and audiences in the local community.

Societies and organizations concerning the element

Qalali Band – Saad Bu Jafaall

Shabab Al-Hidd Band – Ibrahim Bu Rshaid

Ismael Al-Dwas Traditional Band – Ismael Dwas

Bahrain Folklore Band – Abdulla Bin Harban

Dar Bin Harban – Jassim Bin Harban

Dar Alriffa Aloda – Mubarak meftah Mubarak

4. State of the Element: Viability

Threats to the enactment of the practice

The revitalization of the Dur (sing. Dar) have influenced the viability of the practice and is being used by the concerned community. Therefore, as long as these Dur exist the practice is viable.

Threats to the transmission of the practice

There is no threat to the practice of the element, however more support is needed in order to safeguard this cultural heritage practice, seeing the importance of the element which has sustained for over hundreds of years. Moreover, this type of performance shows a link to all the different civilizations that has inhabited this land. This is proven by the existence of certain phrases to this type of music that are difficult to understand, as some of the words used are not used in the Arabic language making it unfamiliar to the public other than the practitioners. This shows how some of the words have been transferred from past civilizations.

Resource availability (tangible elements associated with the practice)

The materials used in this practice are widely available and are produced in Bahrain as desired by the practitioners. However, the method of making some of the musical equipment such as the jahl, a pottery jar used as an instrument, was changed as previously they were using a different type of clay from Persia.

Viability of the intangible elements

The feeling expressed by practitioners towards this element allows them to see these influences and previous civilizations. Whenever this type of singing is practiced, the practitioner explores something new in terms of sounds, melody, and other elements of lyric, and he adores him.

Safeguarding measures

Some conservation measures have been proposed by the professionals and practitioners of this practice. One of the aims of the conservation is to integrate the cultural identity of the element into the template of the society concerned and to activate the art with its lyrical and kinetic patterns through continuous activities and to raise the level of performance. From this standpoint, the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities established the Muharraq

House, which is a house dedicated to the practice of dawn art, which led to the revitalization and stimulation of the element and this art is practiced periodically. In addition, some of these teams are sent abroad in international partnerships for Bahrain, such as the Expo Milano 2015 and other international exhibitions. Monthly allocations are provided to the teams in order to ensure their continuity.

On the other hand, the concerned community is keen on this type of art, so some specialists from the concerned community documented lyric material, and about 40 folk art were listed, including the art of Fajri and its chapters. Team members gather to train until the art is properly connected and the arts that attract the younger generation are sensitized to them, by referring to archival materials such as videos, recordings, and references.

In terms of the proposed conservation measures, the focus will be on revitalizing and activating the role of art to the concerned community. Also, one of the proposed conservation measures is the establishment of teams that practice art in the original way.

5. Documentation and Preparation of the Inventory Entries

Consent of Communities

Societies, organizations and individuals sent their approvals through official letters stating their involvement within the process

Restrictions on the use of collected data

All members of the community have agreed upon the information included in the inventory and therefore there were no restrictions on the information about the element.

Participation of community in data collection

The data collection team at the Bahrain Authority conducted meetings with community groups and societies for Culture and Antiquities (BACA). Firstly, the groups were given a brief on the convention and the activities held by BACA regarding the safeguarding efforts of intangible heritage in Bahrain. Afterwards, community members presented to the data collection team the programs and activities they have conducted regarding the element.

Date and place of data gathered

Group name	Date	Place
Group of band members	16 January 2020	BACA Headquarters
Jassim bin Harban	5 February 2020	BACA Headquarters
Mubarak Najem	8 March 2020	BACA Headquarters

Personnel's involved in the compilation of the inventory
National Heritage Directorate - Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA)

Date of Community consent
20 – 23 January 2020

6. References

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Videos

فن الفجري - مبارك الراعي، وزارة الاعلام

فن الفجري لدار علي بن صقر - فجري بحري، فجري عدساني، فجري حدادي، فجري مخولفي، هيئة شؤون الاعلام

الوان شعبية من دار الجناع ودار بوغنوم - فجري لون بحري، هيئة شؤون الاعلام، هيئة شؤون الاعلام

جلسة شعبية من دار بن حربان - فجري ناصر بن فهد وجاسم بن حربان، هيئة شؤون الاعلام

فجري - فرقة قلالي، دار صالح مبارك الراعي، محمد رسول الله، العلام بوطينية، هيئة شؤون الاعلام

تسجيل فن الفجري في احد الدور الشعبية - النهام علي بن صقر والنهام احمد بوطينية، هيئة شؤون الاعلام

وصلة غنائية من الفن الشعبي فجري، هيئة شؤون الاعلام

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فرقة البحرين للفنون الشعبية فن الفجري، هيئة شؤون الاعلام

لوحات شعبية قل ماعلية - فجري حدادي، هيئة شؤون الاعلام

فن الفجري لفرقة شباب الحد "3 نهامات"، هيئة شؤون الاعلام