

Nomination Form

International Memory of the World Register

1.0 Checklist

Nominees may find the following checklist useful before sending the nomination form to the International Memory of the World Secretariat. The information provided in italics on the form is there for guidance only and should be deleted once the sections have been completed.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Summary completed (section 1) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Nomination and contact details completed (section 2) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Declaration of Authority signed and dated (section 2) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | If this is a joint nomination, section 2 appropriately modified, and all Declarations of Authority obtained |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Documentary heritage identified (sections 3.1 – 3.3) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | History/provenance completed (section 3.4) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bibliography completed (section 3.5) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Names, qualifications and contact details of up to three independent people or organizations recorded (section 3.6) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of owner completed (section 4.1) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of custodian – if different from owner – completed (section 4.2) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of legal status completed (section 4.3) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of accessibility completed (section 4.4) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of copyright status completed (section 4.5) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Evidence presented to support fulfilment of the criteria? (section 5) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Additional information provided (section 6) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of consultation with stakeholders completed (section 7) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Assessment of risk completed (section 8) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Summary of Preservation and Access Management Plan completed. If there is no formal Plan attach details about current and/or planned access, storage and custody arrangements (section 9) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Any other information provided – if applicable (section 10) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Suitable reproduction quality photographs identified to illustrate the documentary heritage. (300dpi, jpg format, full-colour preferred). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Copyright permissions forms signed and attached. Agreement to propose item(s) for inclusion on the World Digital Library if inscribed |

Nomination Form

International Memory of the World Register

Historical documents for the division of Aflaj water in Oman

ID Code [*Internal use only*]

1.0 Summary (max 200 words)

Give a brief description of the documentary heritage being nominated and the reasons for proposing it.

*This is the “shop window” of your nomination and is best written **last!** It should contain all the essential points you want to make, so that anyone reading it can understand your case even if they do not read the rest of your nomination.*

The Omani people have excelled for many centuries in a unique form of engineering, namely the art of engineering and managing the Omani Aflaj which is an orderly division of water among stakeholders who own the shares of the Falaj. Climatic conditions, and harsh desert and mountain terrains, forced the Omani people to construct an Aflaj system to obtain water resources to irrigate agricultural lands and meet their daily needs. This has had a significant positive impact on the stability of social, economic and civilized life in Oman. In order to achieve fairness and accuracy in the distribution of water, laws were enacted to govern the water distribution process. Calculations involving the astronomical sciences were introduced for the division of the Aflaj water. A specialized cadre was selected to manage all aspects of the Falaj (Falaj being the singular of Aflaj); the “Wakheel” was the Executive Director, while the “Areefs” were his assistants.

Aflaj documents fall into two categories. The first are the administrative documents which are the Aflaj management records. These contain the actual distribution of water for each Falaj and the name of the beneficiaries. The Wakheels were responsible for maintaining these documents and they can still be consulted today. The second type of Aflaj documents are the historical documents, which refer to the management of the Aflaj in terms of its importance, its history, and the methods used to calculate distribution.

2.0 Nominator

2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)

National Records and Archives Authority.

2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage.

The National Records and Archives Authority is a governmental entity in the Sultanate of Oman that owns some of these Omani Aflaj related documents.

2.3 Contact person(s) (to provide information on nomination)

Dr. Abdullah Saif Al Ghafri

2.4 Contact details

Name Dr. Abdullah Saif Al Ghafri

Address University of Nizwa **Tel:** (+968) 25446415,
Extension: 415

Telephone +968 99881261

Facsimile
(+968)25446289

Email a.alghafri@unizwa.edu.om

2.5 Declaration of authority

I certify that I have the authority to nominate the documentary heritage described in this document to the International Memory of the World Register.

Signature**Full name (Please PRINT)**

H.E. Dr. HAMAD MOHAMMED AL THAWIANI

Institution(s), if appropriate

National Records and Archives Authority

Date**3.0 Identity and description of the documentary heritage****3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated**

If inscribed, the exact title and institution(s) to appear on the certificate should be given

In this part of the form you must describe the document or collection in sufficient detail to make clear precisely what you are nominating. Any collection must be finite (with beginning and end dates) and closed.

Al Ghantaq Falaj copy / Wilayat of Nizwa / The Dakhiliyah Governorate

Subject	Title of the document	Responsibility Statement	Type of material	Date of writing	Place of conservation and deposit
1.	Al Ghantaq Falaj document	Last Wakheel: Khamees Said Mohammed Ambo Saidi; Custodian of the document: Sheikh Khamees Said Nasir Al Saifi	Document	1380 Hijri = 1960 AD	Original copy at Sheik Khamees Said Al Saifi's house

The Falaj Al Ghantaq document in the wilayat of Nizwa is one of the most important copies that include valuable information on the management and division of the Falaj

water to beneficiaries. Falaj Al Ghantaq has existed since ancient times, and although the record keeping process started with the establishment of the falaj, most of its records disappeared over time. This is the last copy of the Falaj document and the data specified in the document have been certified as accurate. It is kept by Sheikh Khamees Al Saifi and dates back to 1380 Hijri (1960), and is still available.

3.2 Catalogue or registration details

Depending on what is being nominated, appending a catalogue can be a useful way of defining a collection. If this is too bulky or impractical, a comprehensive description accompanied by sample catalogue entries, accession or registration numbers or other ways of defining a collection's size and character can be used.

The Omani Aflaj management documents are administrative documentary records that include specific data regarding the Falaj's beneficiaries. They are handwritten documents kept in the Wakheels houses wherever Aflaj exist. As such, they are not formalized in terms of registry or conservation and have no specific classification either by number or symbol.

Accordingly, the Falaj Al Ghantaq document is a set of handwritten individual documents, with specific paragraphs being dedicated to each beneficiary. These paragraphs provide information related to each beneficiary, such as full name, share of irrigation (amount of Ather), duration of watering, history, and day of distribution.

3.3 Visual documentation if appropriate (for example, photographs, or a DVD of the documentary heritage)

It is useful to append photographs (or in the case of audiovisual material a CD, DVD, USB key of all or some of the material), where this adds additional information, to help the assessors visualize or listen to the collection or document.

Attached to the form are a collection of photos and illustration documentaries, and important films produced by TV channels. Some of these films are translated into English and Japanese.

3.4 History/provenance

Describe what you know of the history of the collection or document. Your knowledge may not be complete, but give the best description you can.

The document in question represents an essential reference for information collection on the Falaj Al Ghantaq in Nizwa. The copy dates back to 1960 and is the last copy for the Falaj, but although it is not only one since the Falaj has had many copies over time. As mentioned in the summary, we do not know exactly about the history of the Falaj, although we do know that the Aflaj have existed in Oman for many centuries. The absence of modern means of conservation

was one of the root causes that led to the loss of the other Falaj's management records.

The rough desert and mountainous nature of Oman, forced the Omani to construct Aflaj and innovate a rigorous system for the division of Aflaj water to beneficiaries for two reasons:

- 1 – To conserve irrigated water and prevent unorganized waste by farm owners.
- 2 – To set a codified form that rules all to prevent disputes and conflicts that may occur among landowners.

Accordingly, each Falaj had a person to manage its affairs known as the "Wakheel". Since every Wakheel was responsible keeping documents related to their Falaj, the number of documents increased; for example: documents existed for Falaj Al Azizi, Falaj Daris, Falaj Al Malki, and Falaj Al Miasser. However, the system meant that it was difficult to find a systematic method for the compilation of documents on Aflaj management.

The importance of the Falaj Al Ghantaq document lies with the clarity of its copy. Most of these copies are similar in terms of content and included the following data:

- 1 - The names of the beneficiaries and Wakheels.
- 2 – Aflaj locations, and farms irrigated by each Falaj.
- 3 - The share of each farmer, and watering duration.
- 4 - Complaints and disputes on the Falaj.
- 5 - Falaj maintenance work and agreements made between the stakeholders on changes in the Falaj affairs.

3.5 Bibliography

A bibliography demonstrates what others have independently said and written about the heritage you are nominating. It is best if you can cite scholars from several countries, rather than just your own country, and if they are authoritative voices clearly independent from both your own institution and UNESCO.

Key words: Aflaj, Qanats, Traditional Agriculture

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- Al-Ghafri, Abdullah, 2005. *Aflaj of Oman: History, Engineering and Management* (in Arabic), in Nizwa (Cultural Journal), Oman, Issue No. 44, October 2005 pp. 11-20. الأفلاج العمانية: تاريخها وهندستها وإدارتها, مجلة نزوى الثقافية, العدد 44 ص 11-20. http://www.nizwa.com/volume44/p11_20.html
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- Al-Habsi, 1994. *Falaj Daris, Nizwa*, M.Sc Theses, Center for Arid Zone University of Wales, Bangor, U.K.
- Al-Hajri, Mohammed Nasir, 1998. *Nizam al aflaj fi Oman wa dorihi fi al tanmiyah* (نظام الأفلاج في عمان و دورها في التنمية) 1st ed.
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(الأفلاج (القنوات): أنظمة الري و مياهها الخفية, أعقد و أقدم الأنظمة العربية في تاريخ الحضارة) , First Ed, Dar Al Hasad Publisher, Syria.

3.6 Names, qualifications and contact details of up to three independent people or organizations with expert knowledge about the values and provenance of the documentary heritage

Name	Qualifications	Contact details
1. Dr. Harriet Nash	PHD, study of traditional management of Aflaj focussing on star use.	nashalbu@gmail.com G.S.M +447770908040
2. Dr. Abudllah Al Ghafri	PHD and Master of Science in Aflaj.	a.alghafri@unizwa.edu.om G.S.M +968 99881261
3. Dr. Wilkinson. J. C	PHD studies at Aflaj Oman, in addition to a collection of books authored about Aflaj in Oman.	jwilkinson@free.fr

The referees you cite will be asked for their opinions. UNESCO may also contact other authoritative referees so that a good spectrum of opinion is available for assessment purposes.

4.0 Legal information

4.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

Name Khamees Said Nasir Al Saifi Address Wilayat of Nizwa / Al Dakhiliyah Governorate / Sultanate of Oman

Telephone (00968) 95202023 Facsimile N/A Email N/A

4.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner)

Name National Records and Archives Authority. Address P.O. Box : 483 , P.C 130 , Sultanate of Oman

Telephone (+968)24130000 Facsimile 24130066 Email info@nraa.gov.om

4.3 Legal status

Provide details of legal and administrative responsibility for the preservation of the documentary heritage

" Aflaj Wakheels" are legally in charge of managing the Falaj and they are the point of contact with the official bodies in the Sultanate: such as the Walis' offices, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources. Aflaj owners - owners of lands and water – choose the Wakheel who is usually a resident of the village, and should possess a respectable and honest personality, know how to read and write and have the ability to perform some simple calculations, in addition to possessing social skills that enable him to communicate with all the people in the village. The village Sheik appoints the Wakheel after considering the recommendations of the Falaj owners. In the event of a conflict, the Wakheel or the Falaj owners can ask for the formation of an audit committee to check the Falaj's financial status. This Committee is composed usually of 3-4 trusted people of the village.

4.4 Accessibility

Describe how the item(s) / collection may be accessed

All access restrictions should be explicitly stated below:

Encouraging accessibility is a basic objective of MoW. Accordingly, digitization for access purposes is encouraged and you should comment on whether this has been done or is planned. You should also note if there are legal or cultural factors that restrict access.

Given the importance of this document, it is not permitted to circulate it without an official letter. Wakheels can be addressed via Walis' offices or by personally contacting them, in addition to personal attendance under the direct supervision of the Wakheel.

4.5 Copyright status

Describe the copyright status of the item(s) / collection

*Where copyright status is known, it should be stated. However, the copyright status of a document or collection has **no bearing** on its significance and is not taken into account in determining whether it meets the criteria for inscription.*

The Wakheel is fully responsible for the management of the Falaj Al Gantaq document, as he keeps the copy until it is delivered to the next Wakheel selected by the region's elders and sheikhs. This procedure has been customary for centuries since the emergence of Aflaj in Oman, so different names of Wakheels are noted on registers over separate intervals. Falaj data is recorded in the presence of the Falaj beneficiary himself. He may not modify the data except in the case of death or purchase and in the presence of witnesses.

5.0 Assessment against the selection criteria

5.1 Authenticity.

Is the documentary heritage what it appears to be? Have identity and provenance been reliably established?

Falaj Al Ghantaq record is undoubtedly an original document, which is proved by the type of paper used, the form of calligraphy that dates back to the time of writing, the old way of writing, and the ink used, as demonstrated in the attached documents. The authenticity of the document lies also in the fact that it was written under the supervision of the Falaj Wakheel and the Falaj community, thus, it cannot be amended easily. What is meant by the "Falaj community" is a committee formed by a group of prominent individuals in the region, who meet good qualities, integrity, and high scientific trust.

5.2 World significance

Is the heritage unique and irreplaceable? Would its disappearance constitute and harmful impoverishment of the heritage of humanity? Has it created great impact over time and/or within a particular cultural area of the world? Has it had great influence (positive or negative) on the course of history?

Building Aflaj is common in countries where topography and the desert require a channel construction; about 38 countries around the world - in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas - have an Aflaj system (attached). However, what distinguishes the Omani system is how water is divided to irrigate agricultural lands. The fact that it was included on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2006 is proof of its importance. Several documentaries have been filmed on the Aflaj in Oman – attached with the form.

Among the most important international activities and events, recognizing the importance of this valuable heritage, are the following:-

- An event on the application of the Omani Aflaj Project was held by the Sultan Qaboos Center in Washington DC, America, in collaboration with the University of Arizona, on the occasion of the Earth Day celebration in the Biosphere Research Center, the University of Arizona. This concluded that the Sultanate was the first Arab country to learn from its experience in the field of Aflaj irrigation (attached).
- An independent lecture on "Hydraulic Engineering in Andalusia and Oman," presented by Dr. Jose Roldan Cañas at the headquarters of the Arab House in Cordoba. He talked about ways to address water (attached).

5.3 Comparative criteria:

Does the heritage meet any of the following tests? (It must meet at least one of them.)

1 Time

Is the document evocative of its time (which may have been a time of crisis, or significant social or cultural change? Does it represent a new discovery? Or is it the “first of its kind”?

2 Place

Does the document contain crucial information about a locality important in world history and culture? For example, was the location itself an important influence on the events or phenomena represented by the document? Does it describe physical environments, cities or institutions that have since vanished?

3 People

Does the cultural context of the document’s creation reflect significant aspects of human behaviour, or of social, industrial, artistic or political development? Or does it capture the essence of great movements, transitions, advances or regression? Does it illustrate the lives of prominent individuals in the above fields?

4 Subject and theme

Does the subject matter of the document represent particular historical or intellectual developments in the natural, social and human sciences? Or in politics, ideology, sport or the arts?

The idea of dividing the Falaj water using temporal timings in Oman (day and night) to determine the irrigation quotas is an innovative idea, and is associated with several sciences including astronomy, jurisprudence, mathematics, law, geology and hydrology.

5 Form and style

Does the document have outstanding aesthetic, stylistic or linguistic value? Or is it a typical exemplar of a type of presentation, custom or medium? Is it an example of a disappeared or disappearing carrier or format?

6 Social/ spiritual/ community significance:

Application of this criterion must reflect living significance – does documentary heritage have an emotional hold on people who are alive today? Is it venerated as holy or for its mystical qualities, or revered for its association with significant people and events?

(Once those who have revered the documentary heritage for its social/ spiritual/ community significance no longer do so, or are no longer living, it loses this specific significance and may eventually acquire historical significance.)

The Aflaj system has played a significant role in the social life of Oman by increasing cohesion and cooperation in the public interest. This is why Omanis were keen to lay sound foundations to maintain this system across generations. The Aflaj system in Oman has produced, and continues to do so, positive results in the organization of social relations and local development through the following:

- 1 - Maintaining the spirit of cooperation and cohesion among the beneficiaries of the Falaj water.
- 2 – Helping to support the financial status of families through the sale of shares of water in a public auction (Munadah).
- 3 - Supporting the family income through Aflaj water rental for an amount to be agreed

between the parties.

4 – Assisting in the production of agricultural crops.

5 - Supporting traditional industries such as distilling mountain rosewater and the production of traditional medical materials.

6 - Supporting social ties among the beneficiaries of the Falaj water whether they are owners, farmers or workers.

7 - Laying essential rules for the arbitration of disputes arising from sharing the Falaj water or maintaining the Falaj.

8 – Providing knowledge of the lineages of local tribes through the use of Aflaj records handed down through the centuries.

The Aflaj have played a significant role in establishing cohesion in Omani society by creating a spirit of cooperation and understanding in the community.

6.0 Contextual information

6.1 Rarity

Omani libraries lack important references such as these in terms of both quantity and quality. Documents addressing Falaj water division, especially in Arabic, can be important references for further intensive study and research. Documents of Aflaj records are available with Wakheels and are still used today.

6.2 Integrity

The document mentioned above was found in a good and sound condition, the writing is clear and eligible despite its age.

7.1 Provide details of consultation about this nomination with the stakeholders in its significance and preservation.

Apart from the nominating institution itself, have other organizations or groups been consulted in the process of preparing the nomination – and, if so, did they support it or oppose it, or have useful comments to make?

Consultations were held with specialists in this field, such as:

1 - Dr. Muhsen Al Kindi - Professor of Modern Literature and Assistant Director of the Omani Studies Center, who was at one time a Wakheel of a Falaj in the Sultanate.

2 - The private library of H.E. Sayyid Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Busaidi, and the general supervisor of the library Dr. Mubarak Al Shaibani.

They supported this nomination, acknowledged its importance and merit for inclusion in the International Memory of the World Register.

8.0 Assessment of risk

Detail the nature and scope of threats to this documentary heritage.

Attach a separate statement if space insufficient.

Be accurate and honest. If your document(s) is at risk for any reason, say so. UNESCO needs to know its true situation.

1 - Aflaj Wakheels keep these records in their own houses which make them vulnerable to theft and loss due to fire or other natural and human factors. Also, they are vulnerable to extinction with the passage of time which will eventually lead to the loss of the Falaj water beneficiaries' rights.

2 - Some Aflaj owners retain important original documents which can mean that important information on the theory and methodology of Aflaj water division is not made available to the institutions concerned with documentary heritage preservation and maintenance.

3 - Ignorance among young people of the real value of these documents and indulgence in preserving them will lead to their extinction in the future, especially after the introduction of foreign labor in the management of Aflaj.

4 - The introduction of advanced computer technology for the division of Aflaj water, and the non-use of these original documents.

9.0 Preservation and Access Management Plan

9.1 Is there a management plan in existence for this documentary heritage?

YES NO

If yes, attach a summary of the plan. If no, please attach further details about current storage and custody of the materials.

YES, a preservation and access management plan has been developed by the ministry as summarized below:

Parties concerned with the documentary heritage in the Sultanate continue to digitize documents related to the management of Aflaj according to studied strategies. They are also keen on acquiring and purchasing these documents from individual owners. At the same time, they are working hard to increase awareness of the importance of this heritage through various media and urge people to cooperate in order to maintain the documentary heritage of Oman.

10.0 Any other information

Detail any other information that supports the inclusion of this documentary heritage on the International Memory of the World Register. If the nomination is successful, how will you use this to promote the MoW Programme?

Attach a separate statement if space insufficient.

Falaj Management:

The management of large Aflaj in Oman involves the manager (Wakheel) and two assistants (Areefs), one to serve the channels and the other to serve the streams. There are also the Qabeth or Book Secretary, and the Dalal and Beedar (paid farmers who normally cut their salary from the yield). The Wakheel performs the entire management of the Falaj and is considered the Executive Director of the Falaj. He is responsible for the division of water, spending the Falaj budget, resolving conflicts between farmers, acting in emergency situations and other activities entrusted to him by the owners of the Falaj. The Areefs are stewards, and they follow the directives of the Wakheel and direct the Beedars.

The Areef can be responsible for the irrigation timing on farms; the Qabeth (Book Secretary) organizes the income that comes to the Falaj from the private water, land and crops shares dedicated to the Falaj. He is also responsible for the renewal of the Falaj book, providing an annual report to the owners of the Falaj and following the Wakheel's instructions.

Late Night

One of the divisions is Redah known as "Late Night Quarter" which is due at seven o'clock after midnight Gharwbi timing.

Falaj Aamaa

The Falaj Aamaa is the point where the falaj emerges from or the main spring of the falaj, and it is called the head of the Falaj with others calling it the mother of the Falaj. The Aamaa is uncovered in most Ainia Aflaj. The Dawoodi Aflaj's Aamaa is the first well at the head of the Falaj and is covered. In some Aflaj, the depth of the Aamaa of the Dawoodi Aflaj is up to 60 meters

Athar

A period of time estimated at almost half an hour; it means that a piece of agricultural land has a stake in the Falaj water for half an hour per Falaj cycle whether weekly or more.

Badaa

Baadaa is half a day (12 hours), and there are night baadaa and day baadaa. It is called (Khburh) in some areas.

Badawah

One-quarter of baadaa is a time. It starts when the length of a person's shadow is 24 feet in most Ghaili Aflaj. In some Dawoodi Aflaj time varies depending on the area of irrigation. It

may begin when the length of a person is 24 or 20 feet, according to what has been the norm.

Al Beedar

The Beedar is a person who specializes in knowing how to divide, distribute and rotate the Falaj water. He can differentiate between the types of palm trees, as well as determine the amount of fertilization necessary for every palm tree, and the quality of the fit male palm tree. He works on behalf of the owners of the land for a fee.

Names of night Mahadrah stars in some regions of the Sultanate:

The names of the stars: Kawa – Al Jawzaa – Al Mufi – Al Shuraa – Al Ghurab – A – Al Janb – Al Adam - B – Al Thraaien – Al Sarah Al Oulaa – Al Baten – Al Sarah Al Thanyia – Al Sefaa – Al Saad – Al Mwathib – Al Kawkabien – Al Thakarrien – Al Thuraya – Al Ghaffr – Al Debaran – Al Aqrab – Al Shabakah.