

# Made in Ras al-Khaimah

## Julfar Pottery – An Industry before the Oil

### History

For the last 700 years Ras al-Khaimah was the home of a pottery producing industry, which was the largest pre-oil industry in the territory of the later United Arab Emirates.

The pottery production started with the rise of the trading town of Julfar, which comprised the whole of northern Ras al-Khaimah. At the beginning the potters worked in Ghailan, later in Shimal and at the end in Wadi Haqil, where we still find the remains of recent pottery kilns.

The production ceased shortly after the Second World War after cheap imports and the rise of plastic made pottery from Wadi Haqil not any longer viable. The last potter died around 20 years ago and today only his son and some relatives do have some knowledge of the production and its processes.



Pottery making in Wadi Haqil



The son of the last potter in front of an old kiln

### Distribution



The pottery from Ras al-Khaimah, known as "Julfar ware", was used all over the territory of the UAE but has also a wide distribution across the western Indian Ocean. It could be found along the southern coast of Iran, in Bahrain, Qatar, the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, in Oman and Yemen and as far as the east coast of Africa.

### Types of Pottery

The potters of Shimal and Wadi Haqil produced a wide range of pottery vessels. From small bowls and cups to cooking pots, from water pots to large storage jars every type of vessel was made by the local potters. Some of the different types can be seen in the two show-cases next to this board and further types you can see in photo below.



Water Pipe - mirzab



Cooking Pot - burma



Cooking / Milk Pot - mahrassa



Large Storage Jars - khars

### Making of the Pottery

In March 2013 the son of the last potter showed some of the processes, which are involved in the production of pottery.

He started with the collection of clays coming from different sources in Ras al-Khaimah. The clays were mixed together and he had to pound the big chunky pieces with sticks until they were smooth and fine.



Then he had to sieve the clay in order to remove all larger stones and other inclusions.



The sieved clay was wetted with water and was ready for use. The potter worked on a turntable on which he formed a base. Then he started to form coils of clay, which he added to the base to shape the wall of the vessel. He smoothed the in- and outside of the coils with a shell and added new coils until he reached the final shape of the vessel.

